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THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR

THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR

JULY 15—SEPTEMBER 1, 1870

BY

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BARRISTER-AT-LAW; LATE LECTURER AT KING'S COLL., LONDON; SUCCESSFUL
CANDIDATE IN INDIAN CIVIL AND HOME CIVIL (CLASS I.) EXAMINA-
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5, LEXHAM GARDENS, W., AND LATELY AT THE ROYAL
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PREFACE

FOR the Promotion Examination of May, 1911, is prescribed the Franco-German War, 1870, July 15 to September 1, with special reference to the tactics of August 4 to 6. This small book is founded on the following authorities :

Hamley, "Operations of War."

Hooper, "Sedan."

German "Official Account."

Moltke, "Franco-German War."

Pratt, "Saarbrück to Paris" (with its good plans and map).

Hoenig, "24 Hours of Moltke's Strategy."

Bonnal, "Fröschwiller" and "La Manœuvre de St. Privat."

French "Official Account."

Graham, "Tactical Deductions from 1870."

Stone, "Tactical Studies" (to which and to the next book I am specially indebted).

Henderson, "Spicheren."

Maurice, "The Franco-German War."

I would particularly recommend to students a study of Henderson's book.

N.B.—Roman figures refer to German, and Arabic figures to French troops.

LIST OF DATES

1870. July 15. French reserves called up.
 July 16. German mobilisation ordered.
 July 19. France declares war.
 July 27. French resign the offensive.
 August 2. Combat at Saarbrücken.—Pestel's detachment of VIII. Corps *v.* 2nd C.
 August 4. Battle of Weissenburg.—II. Bav. Corps, V. and XI. Corps *v.* one division and a cavalry brigade of 1st C.
 10 a.m. French retreat.
 August 5. III. A. on Wörth—MacMahon at Wörth.
 August 6. Battle of Wörth.—II. Bav. Corps, I. Bav. Division, V. Corps, Württemberg Division, XI. Corps *v.* 1st C., one division of 7th C., a cavalry division and brigade.
 7 a.m. Battle begins.

1870. August 6. 10 a.m. German guns in action.
 2.30 p.m. German left and centre connect.
 5 p.m. French retreat.
- August 6. Battle of Spicheren.—VII. Corps, parts of III. and VIII. Corps, V. Cavalry Division *v.* 2nd C.
 12 noon, 1 p.m., 3 p.m. Attacks by von François.
 4 p.m. Arrival of V. and XVI. Divisions.
 5 p.m. Counter-attack by French left.
- August 6. French Army of Rhine divided into Army of Metz and Army of Châlons.
- August 11. Fugitives from Wörth and 5th C. at Lunéville. Strasbourg invested.
- August 12. Bazaine formally in command of Army of Metz. I. Army on the German Nied; II. Army on its left; III. Army on the R. Saar.
- August 13. II. Army on the R. Seille.
- August 14. Battle of Colombey.—I. and VII. Corps, XVIII. Division, I. and III. Cavalry

1870. August 14. Divisions *v.* 3rd C., 4th C. and Imperial Guard.
4 p.m. Battle begun by VII. Corps.
7 p.m. XVIII. Division arrives.
- August 15. I. Army south-east of Metz.
II. Army. — III. and IX. cross at Novéant, X. and XII. at Pont-à-Mousson, Guard at Dieulouard, IV. at Marbache, II. in rear.
III. Army, Nancy-Bayon. Bazaine retiring west of Metz.
- August 16. VIII. Corps crosses at Novéant.
Battle of Vionville. — III. Corps, V. and VI. Cavalry Divisions, part of VIII. Corps, I. Guard Dragoons, X. Corps *v.* 2nd, 6th, 3rd, 4th Cs., Imperial Guard and two cavalry divisions.
9 a.m. Battle begins.
11.30 a.m. VI. Division captures Vionville.
2 p.m. Danger of III. Corps; charge of Bredow.
3 p.m. French counter-attack on the Tronville copses.

1870. August 16. 3 p.m. Arrival of XX. Division.
 5 p.m. Arrival of part of VIII. Corps.
 6.45 p.m. Great cavalry combat.
 7 p.m. German general attack.
 10 p.m. End of battle.
- August 17. VII. Corps crosses at Corny.
 2 p.m. Moltke's orders issued for Battle of Gravelotte.
- August 18. II. Corps crosses at Pont-à-Mousson.
 Battle of Gravelotte.—VII., VIII., II., IX., III., Guard, X., XII. Corps, and I., VI., V. Cavalry Divisions *v.* 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th Cs., Imperial Guard, and two cavalry divisions.
 12 noon. Battle begun by XVIII. Division batteries and by VII. and VIII. Corps batteries.
 2 p.m. XVIII. Division batteries out of action ; German Guard at St. Ail.
 3 p.m. French Guard Division from Plappeville on Roncourt. Steinmetz's first attack.

870. August 18. 3.30 p.m. Ste. Marie captured.
4 p.m. Steinmetz's second attack.
5 p.m. Lull along the whole line.
5.15 p.m. First attack of German Guard.
6 p.m. Steinmetz's third attack.
6.15 p.m. German Guard halts.
7 p.m. XII. Corps at Roncourt. Second attack of German Guard, helped by XII. Corps.
7.15 p.m. Attack of II. Corps.
8 p.m. Fall of St. Privat.
- August 20. MacMahon's great army all at Châlons.
- August 21 to 31. March of MacMahon, pursued by III. and Meuse Armies.
- August 26. Sortie from Metz.
- August 30. Battle of Beaumont.
- August 31 to Sept. 1. Battle of Noisseville.—Bazaine *v.* Frederick Charles.
- Sept. 1. Battle of Sedan.—MacMahon *v.* III. and Meuse Armie

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The Franco-German War

INTRODUCTION

CAUSES OF THE WAR

IN the Seven Years' War, 1756-63, Prussia and France started their hostility, and from Jena, 1806, to Waterloo, 1815, Blücher was France's bitterest foe; in 1859 (Solferino) Bismarck stayed Napoléon's success. Having reformed her military system, Prussia defeated Austria in 1866 and thus became the leading German Power, securing control of all the German armies, whilst Austria ceased to form part of the Fatherland; thus France and Prussia were certain to fight for supremacy. In 1867 an attempted sale of Luxemburg to France nearly brought on war.

Then came the candidature of Leopold, a Hohenzollern prince, for the Spanish throne; France objected, and insisted that King William should not only veto it, but also should not allow it at any future time. In fact the French wanted war, and, though not ready, seized on

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the first excuse, whilst Bismarck, ready and anxious for war, altered a telegram so as to irritate his peace-loving master. On July 15, 1870, the French reserves were called up, and on July 19 France declared war.

1. Bismarck's masterly policy had created

the war of 1870-71

2. Bismarck had shown to be a master of
diplomacy and France had to stop her
expansion.

3. Bismarck's telegram about the French
reserves.

CHAPTER I

THEATRE OF OPERATIONS

THE French frontier along the Saar and the Lauter and the Rhine was a salient, and the Germans held the corresponding re-entrant—a position disadvantageous to the French as long as they remained in the angle, because their base (Paris) was outside the angle and because they had not the initiative.

The Vosges are a considerable obstacle in their southern part, though penetrated by numerous passes, all of them, however, closed by some fort, *e.g.* Belfort, Neu Brisach, Schlestadt, Strasburg, Pfalzburg (Phalsburg), La Petite Pierre (Lützelstein), Lichtenberg, Bitsch, Weissenburg. The main roads ran from Belfort and Strasburg.

West of the Vosges lies a rolling country, favourable for operations, as far as the Moselle, a river guarded by the fortresses Metz and Thionville (Diedenhofen). The next feature westward is the Meuse, watched by Verdun and lined by the Argonnes Hills. We then come to the plain of Châlons.

The Rhine varies from 200 to 500 yards in breadth and is bridged by railways at various points, as well as by boat-bridges, etc. Below Strasburg all the chief bridges were held by the Germans, who thus controlled the issues (except Strasburg). The Moselle is difficult to cross below Toul, but there are bridges at Frouard, Mârbache, Dieulouard, Pont-à-Mousson, Corny, Ars, and several near Metz and Thionville. This river is liable to floods; its tributaries are the Meurthe, the Seille, and the Saar.

As to railways, there were four on the French side:—(1) From the north to Thionville; (2) and (3) from the centre to Sarreguemines and Strasburg; (4) from the south to Belfort.

N.B.—The line Metz to Verdun was not completed.

The German lines ran:—(1) One from the north on Coblenz for the I. Army; (2) four from the centre on Mainz for the II. Army; (3) four from the south on Heidelberg for the III. Army; and railways ran along the banks of the Rhine.

N.B.—Note the distance: Metz to Verdun, 30 miles; and note that telegraphs accompanied all railways.

CHAPTER II

THE MILITARY AND SUPPLY SYSTEMS

THE German military system was started by Scharnhorst in 1807 and improved by von Roon under William I. Its main principles are conscription, short service, retention in peace of war cadres, localisation of army units, *e.g.* an army corps to each province. The army consisted of (1) Standing Army, (2) Reserve, (3) Landwehr, (4) Ersatz Reserve (untrained, but liable in war-time), (5) Landsturm, or *levée en masse*, liable only in case of invasion. The total numbers were over a million.

As to mobilisation, every man knew the position* he would have to fill, if called upon, and an order from Berlin to mobilise would reach every man. There were arrangements as to horses, trains, supplies, and railways. The system was such that in fourteen days there detrained on the Rhine 450,000 men, 1,584 guns, and 135,000 horses.

In the French system exemption was allowed for payment or if a substitute were supplied; they

had the Regular Army, the Reserve, and the Garde Mobile. As to mobilisation, there were difficulties—the army units were not localised, and reservists frequently had to travel long distances to get their equipment. Staff and troops had not worked together; *dépôts* were large and few. Everything was controlled from Paris; in fact it was centralisation run mad. The total numbers were 567,000, from which must be deducted 237,000 for Algeria and garrisons, leaving 330,000 whose “morale” had suffered in Algeria and Mexico.

As to arms, the German needle gun carried 600 yards, the French *chassepôt* 1,200 yards; but the French training was not good. The German artillery was breech-loading, the French muzzle-loading; and as to their *mitrailleuse*, it did well when concealed, but in the open, being short-ranged, could not cope with the enemy's field gun.

* As to supply, the French had plenty of supplies and *matériel*; but their system was old-fashioned: they had not adapted it to railways, their stores were collected in fortresses; in fact, there was congestion.

The German supply, on the other hand, was methodical and up-to-date; Germany was divided into provinces, each of which had to supply an army corps, and the supplies were railed to magazines on the frontier, whence they were railed to other magazines behind the armies, and

thence carried in wagons to the trains marching with the troops. Each corps had 160 military wagons carrying four days' provisions, and these military wagons filled from 400 country carts carrying nine days' provisions for men or seven days' for horses; these country carts filled from the magazines. The troops carried, besides, three days' emergency rations, so that in case of need they had, without counting requisitions, eight days' rations—*i.e.* one day's fresh, three days' emergency, four days' in the military wagons. Not only provisions, but letters, ammunition, and sick had to be carried.

The Germans assume that an army corps can live in a fertile country without aid from its magazines, if (1) cavalry go ahead and collect requisitions; (2) the army corps is kept on the move.

Magazines were formed at the railway junctions, and smaller ones just in rear of the troops, and were filled as much as possible by requisitions; and when the latter could not be had, a money-tax was levied on the towns. Etappen troops from the Landwehr looked after the lines of supply and the hospitals.

CHAPTER III

THE TROOPS

THE French troops were some on the Spanish frontier, some in Algeria and Rome, besides the garrisons of Paris and Lyon. The fighting force was the Army of the Rhine, in eight army corps, under Napoléon III. This consisted of :

- Imperial Guard under General Bourbaki ;
- 1st C. under Marshal MacMahon ;
- 2nd C. under General Frossard ;
- 3rd C. under Marshal Bazaine ;
- 4th C. under General Ladmirault ;
- 5th C. under General de Failly ;
- 6th C. under Marshal Canrobert :
- 7th C. under General Felix Douay.
- Reserve Cavalry in 3 divisions ;
- Reserve Artillery, 19 batteries.

Total, 240,000 men and 925 guns

The three corps under Marshals numbered 35,000 infantry, 3,500 cavalry, and 108 guns ; the other corps 26,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry, and 90 guns ; the Guard, 37,000 infantry, 3,000 cavalry,

and 72 guns. The Reserve Cavalry numbered 6,000.

Of the 6th C., part stopped at Châlons, when the greater part went to Metz; and after August 6 the whole army was divided into—

(1) Army of Metz, under Bazaine.—Imperial Guard, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 6th Cs., and two Reserve Cavalry Divisions and Reserve Artillery—*i.e.* 176,000 men and 540 guns.

(2) Army of Châlons, under MacMahon.—1st, 5th, 7th, 12th Cs., and two Reserve Cavalry Divisions—*i.e.* 149,000 men and 486 guns.

The German forces were under the King, with Moltke as Chief-of-Staff. The field troops consisted of:

I. Army, under Steinmetz.—I., VII., VIII. Corps, and I. and III. Cavalry Divisions—*i.e.* 75,000 infantry, 9,600 cavalry, and 270 guns.

II. Army, under Prince Frederick Charles.—Guard, II., III., IV., IX., X., XII. Corps, and V. and VI. Cavalry Divisions. The Guard and the XII. (Saxon) Corps each had a cavalry division, and the IX. Corps comprised the XVIII. and XXV. (Hessian) Divisions. Numbers—182,000 infantry, 23,400 cavalry, and 624 guns.

III. Army, under the Crown Prince of Prussia.—V., VI., XI., I. and II. Bavarian Corps, Württemberg and Baden Divisions, and II. and IV. Cavalry Divisions—*i.e.* 152,000 infantry, 19,900 cavalry, and 576 guns.

The XII. and Guard Corps numbered 29,000 infantry, 4,800 cavalry, and 90 guns; the other corps 25,000 infantry, 1,200 cavalry, and 84 guns.

Total, 462,600 infantry, 56,800 cavalry, and 1,584 guns.

CHAPTER IV

PLANS OF CAMPAIGN

THIS campaign leads us to consider a salient as against a re-entrant frontier. It is assumed that the strategic concentration takes place on the frontier. Some strategic authorities attach little value to the geometrical form of frontiers, and lay far more stress on organisation and logistic skill; but other authorities consider that a re-entrant gives the advantage of being able to strike at the enemy's communications, and that a salient allows of an advance far into the hostile territory; in both cases the initiative is a necessity. If the salient is so large that it is safe to place therein the base (as Richmond in the case of the War of Secession, 1861-5), it is a great advantage for the troops in the salient, because they cannot be forced away from their base. But most salients are not large enough for this; and in that case, if the army in the salient can take the offensive it should strike from the apex of the salient, as the French Emperor proposed in 1870. If, however, that army be com-

pelled to act defensively, it either should retire from the salient altogether, as the French should have retired behind the Moselle (Metz—Frouard), in which case Moltke would have had a serious task, or should, if its commander have enough genius, and if the salient afford sufficient elbow-room (which the salient in 1870 did not), adopt the Napoleonic system of interior lines, *i.e.* contain one mass of the enemy and crush the other.

Napoléon III. in 1870, thinking he could assume the offensive, formed a good plan—the fleet was to attack North Germany, the field army was to leave a containing force on the R. Saar, and the mass of it was to cross the Rhine below Strasburg, cut in between North and South Germany (the latter supposed to be lukewarm in its support of Prussia) and move against the left flank of the Prussians as they came up.

This plan fell through because the railways were badly organised, trains and hospitals were lacking, the ranks were not full, and there were no magazines, the troops having to be supplied from the fortresses. The Emperor on his arrival at Metz, July 27, therefore resigned the offensive, and, unduly influenced by fears of feeling in Paris, decided not to retire behind the Moselle, but to stand on the defensive, forming front to a flank on the long line from Thionville to Wörth. The reader should compare the British action in Natal, 1899.

Let us now consider the problem from the German point of view. They held a re-entrant, and it is laid down that an army acting from a re-entrant should, if on the defensive, mass near the apex; and Moltke, expecting to take the defensive, collected his most forward army (III.) on Landau ready to strike in any direction. If the army, however, can assume the offensive, then it is laid down it should strike as far back as possible along the hostile lines of communication. It will be seen that the German strategist violated this rule.

His objective was the French army, which was to be cut off from the fertile south and driven northwards; and on finding that the enemy could not assume the offensive, the question arose—should he advance by his right (I. Army), by his centre (II. Army), or by his left (III. Army)? Precedent urged him to use his right (compare Moreau against Kray in 1800); but that army had no railway, was faced by Metz, and was very near neutral territory. His centre was not well up, and therefore he acted by his left because the woods screened its move and a victory would secure the great railway, and that army was the readiest.

Note that railways governed the plans of both sides, and that no plan can be arranged in details beyond the zone of strategic concentration because a battle may alter everything.

CHAPTER V

EVENTS TO AUGUST 6

THE French Army of the Rhine moved at first into the following positions :—

Imperial Guard to Nancy ;
1st C. to Strasburg ;
2nd C. to St. Avold ;
3rd C. to Metz ;
4th C. to Thionville ;
5th C. to Bitsch ;
6th C. to Châlons ;
7th C. to Belfort.

Of the Reserve Cavalry, one division was near Strasburg, and two near Metz. It was in this position that Napoléon found his troops on his arrival at Metz, July 27, and for the reasons already stated gave up the offensive and moved to occupy on the defensive the front Thionville to Wörth—the Guard through Metz to St. Avold, the 2nd C. on Saarbrücken, the 3rd C. to St. Avold, the 4th C. to Bouzonville ; the 6th C. was ordered by rail from Châlons to Nancy, then it

was ordered back again, and finally the greater part of the corps was brought by rail to Metz, where it joined Bazaine on his retreat to that place. Bazaine was in practical command of all these forces, which may be termed the French left; he was formally given the command on August 12.

On the French right MacMahon commanded, having the 5th C. on the front Sarreguemines (Saargemünd)—Bitsch, the 1st C. at Wörth with Abel Douay's Division forward at Weissenburg to cover a possible move of the Marshal to join the left, one division of the 7th C. moving on Wörth, the other part of that corps being skilfully detained at Belfort by demonstrations of a small German detachment at the southern end of the Black Forest. It will thus be seen that the French practically held a defensive position from Thionville to Wörth.

Against this front the German masses moved. Their mobilisation, ordered on July 16, had in fourteen days brought on the Rhine their three field armies, namely, I. Army on the right on Trèves (Trier), II. Army in the centre on Kaiserslautern, III. Army on the left on Landau. In Germany itself the XVII. Division and Landwehr troops defended the coasts, watched the Danes, and garrisoned the fortresses, whilst the corps (I., II., VI.) that moved last would, if necessary, be utilised to hold Dresden and the other Elbe

fortresses to check the Austrians in case the latter moved.

Beyond the Rhine the I. Army had no railway and the two other armies gave up railway transport, and therefore all three armies marched towards their several destinations. At Saarbrücken, on the frontier, was a detachment of 1,000 men of the VIII. Corps under Lieut-Col. Pestel, and the forward movement of the French 2nd C. brought on the

Plan 3.

COMBAT AT SAARBRÜCKEN

AUGUST 2

This was really a reconnaissance in force by the French, and is called the "baptême de feu" of the Prince Imperial, who, with the Emperor, was present. It resulted in a loss of 70 on either side and in the retirement of the German detachment. But the French did not cross the R. Saar.

This slight affair had no effect on the German movement; the II. Army made for Saarbrücken and the I. Army marched from Trèves south-eastwards so far that it collided with the II. Army and occasioned some difficulty, whilst on the German left Moltke, for the reasons already stated and also to cover South Germany, hurried the III. Army forward in spite of the Crown Prince's desire to wait for his trains. That army in consequence crossed the frontier and brought on the

BATTLE OF WEISSENBURG

Plan 1.

AUGUST 4

On this day the III. Army approached the Lauter between Weissenburg and Lauterburg, a strong position held only by Gen. Abel Douay with one division and a cavalry brigade of the 1st C., being MacMahon's advanced troops. The II. Bavarian Corps on the German right was strongly resisted at Weissenburg, but the V. Corps in the centre and the XI. Corps on the left crossed the stream, the latter corps aiming at the French right at the Geisberg. Then 30 field-guns were massed against Weissenburg, which was ultimately carried. At 10 a.m. Douay ordered a retreat, to cover which the French obstinately defended the chateau on the Geisberg. Gen. Abel Douay fell in the action. The French retired in disorder, but the pursuit was not vigorous as the IV. Cavalry Division had been delayed.

The numbers in the battle were—Germans 40,000, French 5,000; and the losses 1,500 and 1,100 respectively.

Tactical Comments—(1) French scouting bad; (2) French did not break the bridges over the Lauter; (3) Douay's was either a containing force or it was not: if it was, it should have retired; if it was not, it should have been stronger; (4) on the German side we note insufficient use of Cavalry and failure to pursue.

On August 5 the III. Army advanced on Wörth; on the opposite side MacMahon was trying to mass his three corps (1st, 5th, 7th) at the same place with a view to attack.

Neither general expected a battle till August 7, but a subordinate's action brought on the

Plan 2.

BATTLE OF WÖRTH OR FRÖSCHWILLER

AUGUST 6

After skirmishing during the night a German brigadier of the V. Corps, Gen. von Montbary, foolishly crossed the Sauerbach R. and at 7 a.m. entered Wörth—this began the battle. Behind the stream the French front stretched four miles, and from the high slopes their guns and long-range chassépôts commanded the river, which was six feet deep; the French could make use, too, of the hop gardens and vineyards. There were, however, bridges at Wörth and below and above that town, and a weak point was the Niederwald, which would screen the German advance. The French line of retreat lay through Niederbronn.

The II. Bavarian Corps moved through Langensulzbach against the French left, whilst the French right moving on Gunstett, struggled with the XI. Corps. Then the V. Corps in the centre opposite to Wörth brought at 10 a.m. 84 guns into action, the XI. Corps also massing 24 guns. The Crown Prince sent orders forbidding a battle that day, but

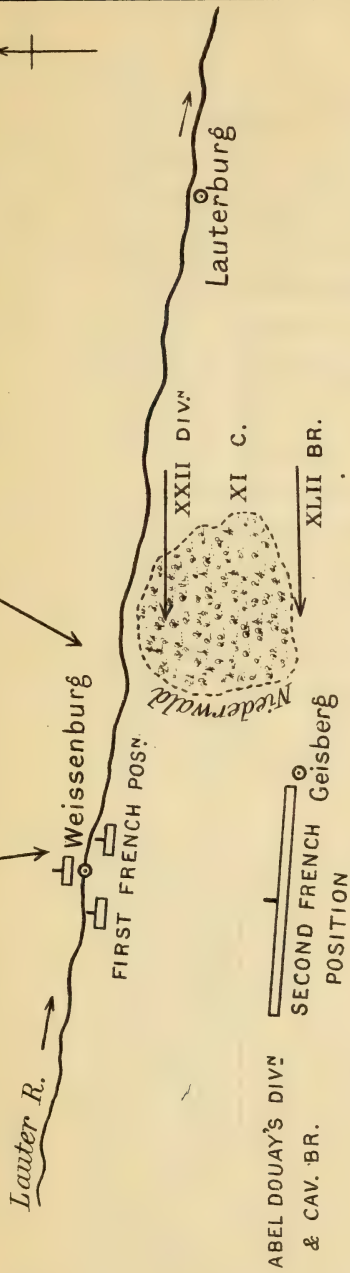
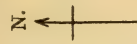
Weissenburg, Aug. 4.

Germans, 40,000.

French, 5,000.

II B. C.

V C.



Scale, 1 Mile to 3/4 Inch approx.

the V. Corps was too committed to withdraw. A frontal attack could not succeed without a movement against the French flanks: but just then the Bavarians, obeying the Crown Prince, retired to Langensulzbach. Luckily for the Germans, however, the XI. Corps pressed on into the Niederwald. All the time attacks and counter-attacks raged at Wörth, the V. Corps finally getting its batteries over the river. At that moment, near Morsbronn, one Lancer and two Cuirassier regiments of Michel's Brigade of Duhesme's Cavalry Division charged some German infantry, which latter received them in open order and did great execution. Steadily the XI. Corps fought its way through the Niederwald, connecting at 2.30 p.m. with the left of the V. Corps. The burning village of Elsasshausen was stormed and the copse south of Fröschwiller carried. The Bavarians also re-entered the fight.

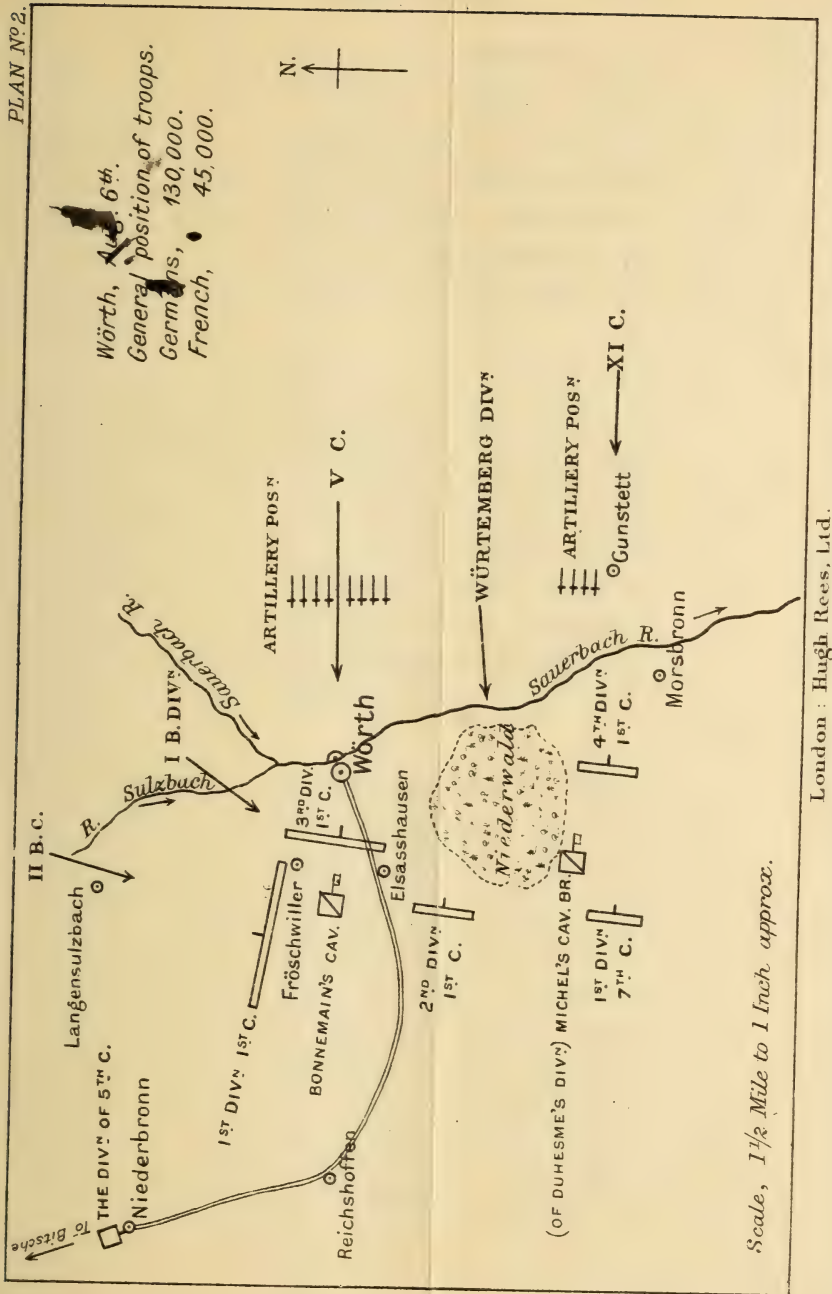
Thus the French were hemmed in, and MacMahon tried on his right a counter-stroke which drove the Germans east of Elsasshausen back into the Niederwald, and Bonnemain's Cavalry Division with a gallant but unsuccessful charge assisted his counter-stroke. Then the Württemberg troops from the south and the Bavarians from the north came up, whilst the XI. Corps stormed the burning village of Fröschwiller. At 5 p.m. the French fled on Niederbronn, where a division of the 5th C., delayed by the destruction of a rail-

way bridge and by contradictory orders, made its tardy appearance, but offered only a short resistance.

The Germans in action numbered 80,000, the French (1st C., one division of 7th C., and a cavalry division) 45,000, and the losses were, on the German side 10,000, on the French side 8,000, 33 guns, and 9,000 prisoners.

It was so complete a rout that only one brigade of the 5th C. Division went *viâ* Bitsch to join the main French army; all the rest fled towards Saverne, not blowing up the railway tunnel. Again the pursuit failed, for the Crown Prince had not meant to fight on August 6, and the IV. Cavalry Division was still in rear; but it marched during the night, and on the evening of August 7 caught the French at the foot of the Vosges. The 1st C. at once fled to Saarburg, where it joined the 5th C., and both fled to Lunéville, August 10.

Tactical Comments.—(1) On the French side the battle was a strategic error; it would have been better for MacMahon to retire on Frouard and to hold the Moselle in conjunction with Bazaine at Metz; passive defence; bridges not broken; batteries not massed; cavalry badly posted and employed in charges in mass on unfavourable ground; cavalry useless against unbroken infantry; Niederwald not properly occupied; retreat rapid though tardy; smaller



Scale, 1½ Mile to 1 Inch approx.

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F

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2

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losses of defenders. (2) On the German side initiative, and, in the later stages, unity of action of the several forces; artillery preparation; massing of guns; infantry in open order too much for cavalry; failure of frontal attack at Wörth itself and success of enveloping movements; failure of cavalry to pursue.

On August 5 the II. Army reached the front Neunkirchen—Zweibrücken and cavalry reported the French as in retreat, probably behind the R. Moselle from Metz to Thionville (Diedenhofen): if so, then the I. Army would hold them in front and the II. Army would make a circuit south of Metz and force them to retire or to fight. The II. Army, if beaten, would fall back on the III. Army as the latter came over the Vosges.

The pushing south-eastwards by the I. Army led to mixing up of that army and of the II. Army at Saarbrücken on August 6, where arrived first the XIV. Division of the VII. Corps. In this quarter Gen. Frossard with the 2nd C. had retired on Spicheren, where he lay entrenched with the 3rd, 4th, 5th Cs. nine to nineteen miles behind him, and the Imperial Guard twenty-three miles behind him. Gen. von Kameke, commanding the XIV. Division of the VII. Corps, foolishly attacked Frossard, and thus brought on the

BATTLE OF SPICHEREN OR FORBACH

Plan 3.

AUGUST 6

To Kameke's aid came the rest of the VII. Corps, the VIII., and the III. Corps. Frossard's position was strong—his centre on the densely wooded Red Hill or Rotheberg, his left on the Stiering Wendel ironworks. At noon the only brigade then up (von François' of the XIV. Division) assailed both flanks at once; but strong French counter-attacks fell on it, and when the other brigade of the XIV. Division arrived, it had to reinforce both flanks, and thus the units got mixed up.

At 1 p.m. a Fusilier battalion of the XIV. Division rushed and established itself at the foot of the Red Hill, and when at 3 p.m. the German guns had forced the French artillery to go farther back, this Fusilier battalion, under von François (who fell), climbed up, and, driving the French out of their entrenchments, occupied the narrow spur of the cliff; but the XIV. Division was still in a critical position when, at 4 p.m., the V. Division of the III. Corps and XVI. Division of the VIII. Corps struck in. The German left pressed on; in the centre the XVI. Division moved on to the Red Hill to support the Fusiliers; the German right *viâ* Stiering was threatening Frossard's retreat, the Forbach highway. The French commander at once reinforced

his left, which at 5 p.m. advanced and drove back the attackers. The French advance was then stopped by the batteries on the Folster Height, and the German infantry renewed their efforts. Such was the ground that the cavalry could not act, but eight horse artillery guns did manage to reach the top of the Red Hill and to engage three French batteries.

Then came the decisive stroke on the German right—the XIII. Division from Völklingen and part of the XVI. Division made for Stiering, and whilst some attacked that place, others made for the heights and drove the French off them on to Forbach. This was decisive, and by night-fall Frossard abandoned the Forbach road and retired on to Oettingen, safe in the darkness from pursuit.

The numbers were—German 27,000, increasing to 67,000; French 32,000. Losses, 5,000 and 4,000 respectively.

Tactical Comments.—(1) On the German side note the tactical use of railway, which brought up the III. Corps. Kameke thought he had only a rearguard before him, and his attack was rash. He might easily have been routed; and indeed, if this action had not been fought, it is possible that the French would have concentrated east of the Moselle and given the Germans a chance of settling matters by an early and crushing victory. On the other hand, the Germans hurried up to

the sound of the cannon, and it was, after all, a victory which damaged the 2nd C. and which gave Moltke important information; and it led to the French retreat. Moltke did not pursue—the defence is that he waited for the III. Army to cross the Vosges; if so, then the battle should not have been fought; the front at first very extended, and hence mixture of units; moral effect of XIII. Division appearing in French rear. (2) On the French side the value of trenches is obvious; bridges over the Saar not broken; Bazaine committed a great error in not helping Frossard with the forces in rear of that general, and if he had done so might have been victorious.

Völklingen.

XIII DIV. VII C

Saarbrücken

V C.D.



(VII C.) & PARTS OF VIII & III Cs.
 Roßberg Height
 Red Hill
 (Hoheberg)

FRENCH 2ND CORPS

(Frossard)

Stiering Wendel

Forbach Heights

Spicheren

Forbach

+++++

FRENCH RES. ART Y.

Oettingen

4TH C.

3RD C.

(all distant 9 - 19 Miles)

5TH C.

Forbach or Spicheren, Aug. 6.

General positions of troops.

French, 32,000.

Germans (increasing) from 27,000
 to 67,000.

Scale, 1½ Mile to 1 Inch approx.

Combat of Saarbrücken.

Aug. 2.



PESTEL'S DET.

♂ ♀

Saar R.

Saarbrücken

♂ ♀

Hills

2ND C. (Frossard.)

CHAPTER VI

RIGHT WHEEL OF THE GERMAN ARMIES

MACMAHON'S retreat carried him away from Bazaine, though, by using the Lunéville—Metz railway, he could have effected a junction with that Marshal and held the Moselle from Toul to Thionville. The fact is that his men were out of hand and he heard that the Germans had appeared at Pont-à-Mousson (in reality some German Uhlans did enter Nancy on August 12); therefore his 1st C. moved on Neufchâteau, where it entrained for Châlons. To the same place proceeded the 5th C. and from Paris the new 12th C., and to the same place from Belfort came the greater part of the 7th C. by rail *viâ* Bar-sur-Aube, Paris, and Reims. This powerful force, 133,000 infantry, 16,000 cavalry, and 486 guns, assembled at Châlons by August 20, but it was 120 miles from Bazaine.

In consequence of Wörth and Spicheren the Emperor Napoléon at first wisely thought of retiring Bazaine also on Châlons, but fear of

Paris opinion induced him to attempt to hold Metz and the R. Moselle with that Marshal's forces.

The III. Army, not knowing MacMahon's difficulties or route, advanced slowly. It avoided Bitsch, which held out all the war; it invested Ffalzburg (Phalsburg); whilst La Petite Pierre, Marsal, and Lichtenberg surrendered. The I. Army on the right would advance on Metz by the Sarrelouis road; the II. Army in the centre would move through St. Avold; the III. Army on the left would march *viâ* Saarunion and Dieuze, but as it had a greater distance to traverse Moltke had to halt the first two armies in order to bring them all three into line.

The cavalry reported the French in retreat, and scouts crossed the Moselle, forcing back part of Canrobert's 6th C. on Châlons. All showed that Bazaine in strength was near Metz. Did that mean further retreat or a heavy blow at the German right? On August 12 the I. Army was on the German Nied R., the II. Army on its left, and the III. Army on the Saar R. On the 13th the II. Army reached the Seille R. The French seemed, indeed, inclined to retreat. But they might fall on the I. Army; therefore the right of the II. Army—III. and IX. Corps—was halted south of Metz to flank any such assault. If Bazaine should attack those two corps, then the I. Army would assume the offensive. The

rest of the II. Army was making for Pont-à-Mousson. If, after crossing, they should be heavily assailed, they would fall back on the III. Army. As a fact, the French were bent on retreat, and though a flood did damage his pontoons, Bazaine could have crossed on the 13th; and when, on August 14, the VII. Corps saw a retreat in progress, a battle was forced on.

BATTLE OF COLOMBEY-NOUILLY OR BORN Y Plan 4.

AUGUST 14

Metz could not by itself hold out for more than fourteen days, and, as it was found that the entrenched position on the Nied R. covering the fortress was locally defective, it was decided to retire on Verdun; and so, on August 14, the 2nd 4th, 6th Cs. began the move, the 3rd C. remaining behind the Colombey brook to cover the retirement. At 4 p.m. this retirement, impeded as it was by the trains and by the paucity of bridges, was disturbed by the onset of the VII. Corps. The head of this corps fell on the far superior French 3rd C. at Colombey, but then came up the I. Corps and fell on the French left at Nouilly. Soon there were in action 60 German guns, whose fire drove the French back as far as Borny.

Then came General Ladmirault's 4th C. against the German right flank—the I. Corps—whilst on the German left the VII. Corps was standing firm

near Colombey, and at 7 p.m. arrived from the south the XVIII. Division of the IX. Corps of the II. Army, which fell on the French right near Borny. This German reinforcement, and the fact that the German right held its own against Ladmirault, caused the French, as darkness set in, to retire their whole line, the guns of Metz checking any pursuit.

The numbers were—German 98,000, French 104,000. Losses, 5,000 and 3,600 respectively.

Tactical Comments.—Note the great part played in the battle by the German artillery which hurried forward. The action was unexpected and perhaps foolish on the German part, for their numbers were smaller and Bazaine had a great chance. The German commanders, however, took the responsibility and backed up one another, whereas the Imperial Guard, close behind the 3rd C., did nothing. Tactically it was a French victory, strategically a German victory, for the French retreat had been arrested and a day gained for the crossing of the Moselle by the II. and III. Armies.

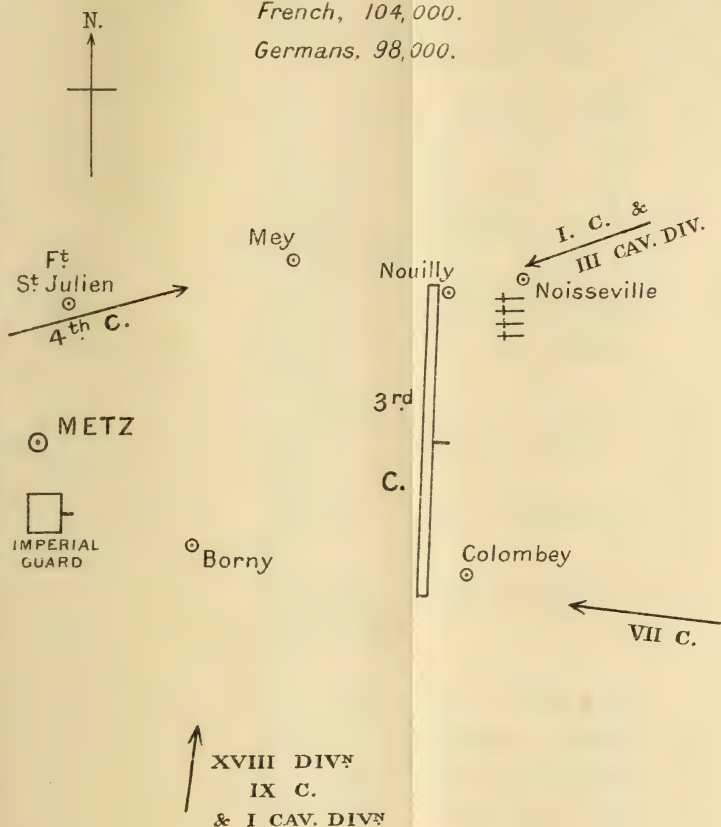
Bazaine should have used the bridges at Pont-à-Mousson and Corny and pontoons below the city; in any case delay was fatal, and if he meant to retreat the big battle at Colombey was useless. As a fact, he could have crossed on the 13th, for he had in Metz itself two permanent bridges and one railway bridge.

Colombey, Nouilly or Borny. Aug. 14.

General positions of troops.

French, 104,000.

Germans, 98,000.



Scale, 1½ Mile to 1 Inch approx.

On August 15 the cavalry found no French east of Metz, and clouds of dust west of that place betrayed the retreat. The II. Army therefore could cross the Moselle without fear. The passage was thus effected from August 15 to August 18—

August 15. I. Army stood south-east of Metz.
 II. Army.—III. and IX. Corps crossed at Novéant, X. and XII. Corps at Pont-à-Mousson, Guard at Dieulouard, IV. Corps at Marbache *en route* for Toul, II. Corps in the rear on Pont-à-Mousson.

August 16. I. Army.—VIII. Corps crossed at Novéant.

August 17. I. Army.—VII. Corps crossed at Corny.

August 18. II. Army.—II. Corps crossed at Pont-à-Mousson.

On August 15, of the I. Army the I. Corps was left at Courcelles to protect the railway, whilst the VII. and VIII. Corps approached the Seille ready to cross the main river. This day the French retreated west by both the roads *viâ* Doncourt and Mars-la-Tour towards Verdun—foolishly they left intact the bridges above Metz—and at night stretched from Gravelotte to Vionville and Doncourt, Bazaine all the time convinced the Germans would cross north of Metz. The

cavalry of the II. Army scouting along the Verdun road struck one of the French cavalry divisions near Mars-la-Tour. This day the III. Army was on the front Nancy—Bayon.

Plans 5, 6] BATTLE OF REZONVILLE OR VIONVILLE—
MARS-LA-TOUR

AUGUST 16

Prince Frederick Charles wrongly thought there would be no more serious work with the French on the Moselle, and therefore the III. and X. Corps were sent north towards the Verdun road *viâ* Gorze and Thiaucourt, whilst the rest of the II. Army hurried west towards the Meuse R. As to the French, the Emperor indeed, with two cavalry brigades, departed *viâ* Etain, but the army was checked by its own trains, and as the 4th and 3rd Cs. and 1st Cavalry Division on the right (north) lagged, the 2nd C., the 6th C., the Imperial Guard, and the 3rd Cavalry Division on the left (south) were held back. But at 9 a.m. at Vionville the shells of the V. Cavalry Division of the II. Army startled them, and a serious action commenced.

The III. Corps pressed *viâ* Gorze on Vionville, and, face to face with the French 2nd C., opened fire with 24 guns. The V. Division carried on a desperate struggle through the wood south of Vionville. As it had been assumed that the French were retiring on Verdun, the VI. Division

had been directed *viâ* Mars-la-Tour on Etain to bar the northern road. On reaching the Tronville heights it saw the real state of affairs and wheeled to the right on Vionville, guns in front; the VI. Division captured Vionville at 11.30 a.m. and connected with the V. Division. Then these troops carried Flavigny.

Thus on a front four miles long, S.E. of Vionville, all the infantry and artillery were engaged in one line, and behind them stood only the V. and VI. Cavalry Divisions. Still the Germans pushed the right of the French 2nd C. back towards Rezonville; the French Guard Cuirassiers charged, but were stopped by the rapid fire of two companies of the V. Division in line, which reserved their fire till the horse were within 250 yards. Thrown into disorder, they were pursued by some German Hussars and lost heavily, and indeed Bazaine himself was nearly captured near Rezonville.

Then the VI. Cavalry Division passed through the artillery to the front, and found itself face to face with fresh French troops; for Bazaine had relieved the 2nd C. by the Guard Grenadier Division, replacing it on the left by a division of the 3rd C. The German Cavalry Division retired under a terrific fire. Still, the German guns managed to move forward to Flavigny.

By 2 p.m. the III. Corps had exhausted itself, and its left was in real danger. On this flank

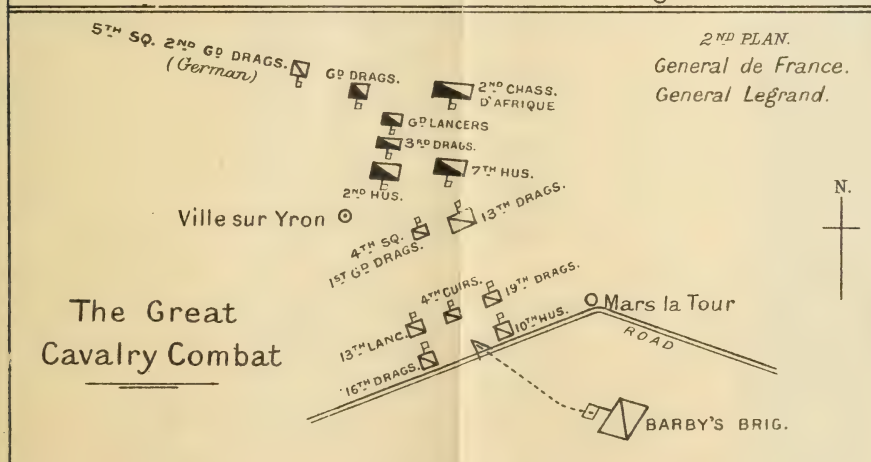
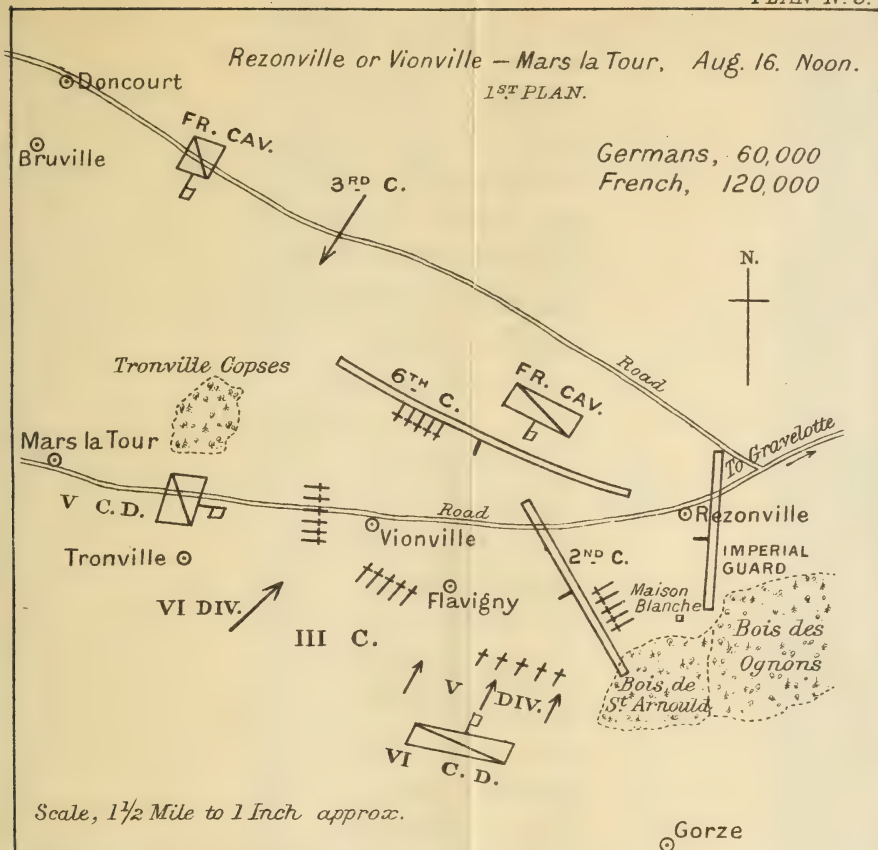
Bredow's
Charge.

Marshal Canrobert with the 6th C. in the French centre was pressing, and to resist him there were only two cavalry regiments of the V. Cavalry Division. These two regiments 800 strong, under Gen. von Bredow, "first traversed," says Moltke, "in column, the hollow sinking down from Vionville, then wheeled to the right, and mounted the slope to the eastward, both regiments on one front. Received with heavy fire, they rode over the first line, broke through the guns and rode over the second line." Then, surrounded by the French cavalry, they had to ride back through the French infantry. They lost half their numbers, but they had checked Canrobert's onslaught on Vionville.

At 3 p.m. three French divisions of the 3rd and 4th Cs., moving on the Tronville copses, drove the Germans out. Thus the III. Corps had fought alone from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; but soon after the latter hour arrived the XX. Division of the X. Corps, which, marching *viâ* Thiaucourt, hurried up to the sound of the cannon, and, connecting with the left of the III. Corps, cleared the victorious French out of the Tronville copses.

On the right of the III. Corps part of the VIII. Corps *viâ* Arry emerged at 5 p.m. from the Bois de St. Arnould. But the French here were too strong. Then a French counter-attack likewise failed, and the fighting here became stationary.

The retreat of the French from the Tronville





copses was probably accelerated by the arrival of the head of the XIX. Division of the X. Corps from the west *viâ* Mars-la-Tour. This division found itself opposed by the French 4th C. and by three French cavalry divisions near Bruville. The X. Corps Division suffered fearfully from the chassépôt fire, and the remnant rallied at Tronville, the pursuing French being checked by a charge of the First Guard Dragoons.

Next occurred, about 6.45 p.m., the great Cavalry ^{Great Cavalry Charge.} Combat. French cavalry appeared near Ville-sur-Yron, *i.e.* Legrand's Division and de France's Guard Brigade. Against them moved Barby's Brigade and others, the Germans having six regiments and the French ten, and a furious hand-to-hand struggle ensued, in which the Germans had unexpected help from the 5th squadron of the Second Guard Dragoons; this squadron, retiring from a reconnaissance, fell on the French flank. Gradually the French horse fell back on Bruville, behind which place stood Clérembault's Cavalry Division of the 3rd C.; but the German pursuit was arrested not by him, but by the infantry of the 4th C. The German horse then retired on Mars-la-Tour, and the French gave up the offensive on their right.

In the end the Germans occupied Vionville and drove back the French on Rezonville; but at 7 p.m., though the French still had superior numbers and though the Germans were exhausted,

Prince Frederick Charles ordered a general attack, which was a bad failure. Fighting ceased at 10 p.m.

Tactically it was a drawn battle, strategically a German victory, for the retreat was stopped. The numbers were—60,000 Germans and 120,000 French; losses 16,000 on each side, and each was too exhausted to pursue.

Tactical Comments.—(1) Bazaine, if he had used the Guard on his right, could have crushed the Germans and continued his retreat on Verdun; but he believed in passive defence, relying on the chassepôts and on the mitrailleuses, and instead of regarding Metz as a pivot of offensive manœuvre he clung to it as a base; besides, he used only two roads, avoiding the one through Briey because it was hilly. Political reasons were acting on the Marshal.

The French scouting was bad; both sides used cavalry to re-establish the fight, and in this battle occurred the greatest cavalry combat of modern times—2,200 Germans against 2,800 French.

(2) The Germans really expected that the French Marshal had retreated farther than he had, and aimed to strike, not his mass, but his rear-guard. None the less did the III. Corps attack, and Gen. von Alvensleben was saved by his brilliant offensive. No doubt the Germans formed front to a flank, but their own strength and the position of the III. Army neutralised the

danger. The Prince's attack at 7 p.m. is generally considered an error, and the only defence is that the Hessian Division of the IX. Corps on the left of the Moselle was near at hand.

On the day of this battle the rest of the II. Army—IV., IX., XII., and Guard Corps—was moving west towards the R. Meuse, except the II. Corps, still east of Pont-à-Mousson. The IV. Corps made for Toul, which commanded the railway. A *coup de main* was resolved upon; but field-guns proved useless, a storm was impossible in face of bastions of masonry and wide, wet ditches, the gates could not be battered in, and the place had ultimately to be invested by a Bavarian brigade and some Etappen troops of the III. Army.

At Pont-à-Mousson the King and Moltke, hearing of the battle of Vionville, ordered the XII. Corps on Mars-la-Tour, the VII. and VIII. Corps to stand ready at Corny and Novéant, and the Guard to make for Mars-la-Tour and there place itself on the left of the XII. (Saxon) Corps.

On August 17 the King arrived at Vionville; by 1 p.m., the VII. and VIII. Corps on the right, IX., III., and X. Corps in the centre, XII. and Guard Corps on the left, were closing in on the French position at Rezonville. Thus seven corps and the I., V., VI. Cavalry Divisions were at hand, forming indeed front to a flank, but without danger

because of their strength and of the position of the III. Army, which could support them from the south.

The French might (1) still retreat on Verdun by the northern road *viâ* Briey, or (2) remain near Metz. To meet either case the German left was directed on Doncourt, and in the first case the left would hold the French till the right could come up; in the second case the German left would outflank the French right, whilst the German right held the French left. Note that in that case each would fight with reversed front; but the danger of such a position was lessened for the French by Metz, and for the Germans by their strength and by the position of the III. Army. This was a case of strategic interception—nowadays such an operation is almost impossible owing to the huge size of armies and to large numbers of cavalry—and Bazaine could have met it either by breaking through the II. Army or by going round that Army's outer flank *viâ* Briey (compare Kray's action against Moreau, 1800).

On his side, Moltke, at 2 p.m., directed an advance forward from the right to the left by échelons, whereupon the King returned to Pont-à-Mousson. At this time the XII. Corps, with its cavalry ahead, reached Mars-la-Tour, with the Guard on its left at Hannonville; the II. Corps reached Pont-à-Mousson.

BATTLE OF GRAVELOTTE-ST. PRIVAT OR
AMANVILLERS

Plan 7.

AUGUST 18

Bazaine thought a retreat on Verdun unwise with the Germans on his left, and took up near Metz a very strong position, facing west, from Roncourt and St. Privat on his right to Gravelotte and the R. Moselle on his left, seven miles long, which meant eight men per yard. There he posted his 6th, 4th, 3rd, and 2nd Cs. in order from the north. Cavalry stood in rear on both flanks, and the Imperial Guard in reserve on the left, for Bazaine clung to Metz. The Guard should have been on the weak point, the right, instead of the 6th C., which had few entrenching tools. Shelter trenches, battery emplacements, covered ways of communication, and outlying farmhouses strengthened the position.

As to the Germans, the VII. Corps stood near the river on the right as a pivot for the wheel, VIII. Corps near Rezonville, IX. Corps on its left, III. and X. Corps in second line, Guard and XII. Corps on the left. As Prince Frederick Charles ordered the XII. to form the extreme left, it crossed the march of the Guard at Mars-la-Tour, and hence arose delay.

At noon the batteries of the XVIII. Division of the IX. Corps opened near Verneville, for the corps commander wrongly supposed that he had

found at Amanvillers the extreme French right flank—compare similar error of Austrians at Königgrätz, 1866. The XVIII. Division guns took up a position exposed on all sides, and to support them the XVIII. Division, on a wide front, moved forward south and north of Verneville. The troops and the artillery suffered from the long-range chassepôts; two guns were taken by the French, and by 2 p.m. the XVIII. Division batteries were nearly unserviceable. Then the Hessian Division—XXV.—of the IX. Corps, moving on the left along the railway, brought up some guns in support. There arrived also the batteries of the III. Corps and of the Guard, and thus from St. Ail towards Verneville was formed an artillery front of 130 pieces.

The German Guard reached St. Ail at 2 p.m., and its commander saw that it was necessary, before advancing, to deal with Ste. Marie-aux-Chênes, a strong village held by the French; but the Saxon—XII.—Corps had to be waited for. At 3 p.m. the Saxon batteries approached Ste. Marie from the west and opened fire, and at 3.30 p.m. the Guard and the Saxons rushed the village. After some other efforts there came at 5 p.m. in this quarter a lull in hostilities.

On the German right about noon, when firing was heard from Verneville, batteries of the VII. and VIII. Corps at Gravelotte opened fire, but themselves suffered from French tirailleurs in the

woods. These latter had to be driven out by infantry, and then the batteries pushed nearer, silencing several of the hostile guns. At 3 p.m. troops of the VIII. Corps stormed the farmstead of St. Hubert, a formidable position, but failed on the farmstead of Moscou.

First
Attack
of Stein-
metz.

Then at 4 p.m. Gen. von Steinmetz ordered a fresh attack. Four batteries, supported by the I. Cavalry Division, dashed under heavy fire to St. Hubert; the cavalry galloped towards Point du Jour. But the whole effort was useless. French tirailleurs then swarmed forth from Point du Jour, but St. Hubert remained in German hands. Here also, at 5 p.m., occurred a lull.

Second
Attack
of Stein-
metz.

At 6 p.m. the King ordered a fresh effort by the I. Army, reinforced by the II. Corps. The VII. Corps therefore advanced against the French 2nd C., which had been reinforced by the French Guard Voltigeur (Light) Division. A fierce struggle ensued. On the German side arrived the II. Corps, which, marching from Pont-à-Mousson at 2 a.m., *viâ* Rezonville, reached Gravelotte; and at 7.15 p.m. it hurried on St. Hubert. But darkness was falling, and at 10 p.m. firing ceased. In fact, the French left was impregnable.

Third
Attack
of Stein-
metz.

On the German left the Saxons, after helping to capture Ste. Marie, were assembling at Auboué preparatory to an attack on the French right; but at 5.15 p.m., though the Saxons could not

First
Attack
of Ger-
man
Guard.

co-operate for an hour or more, the Prince of Württemberg, commanding the Guard, thought that the time had come for an assault on the French right, which really extended much farther north than he expected. The result was the first attack of the German Guard. It was in this order—the II. Division with some Hessians along the railway and from St. Ail, the I. Division from Ste. Marie. The attack was against the 6th and 4th Cs., which waited in their shelter-trenches and in the strong village of St. Privat. The losses of the Guard were enormous; but by 6.15 p.m. the attackers reached within 700 yards of St. Privat and Amanvillers and halted, repulsing the French cavalry. There they had to stop for three-quarters of an hour, for not till 7 p.m. did the leading Saxons approach Roncourt.

Second
Attack
of Ger-
man
Guard.

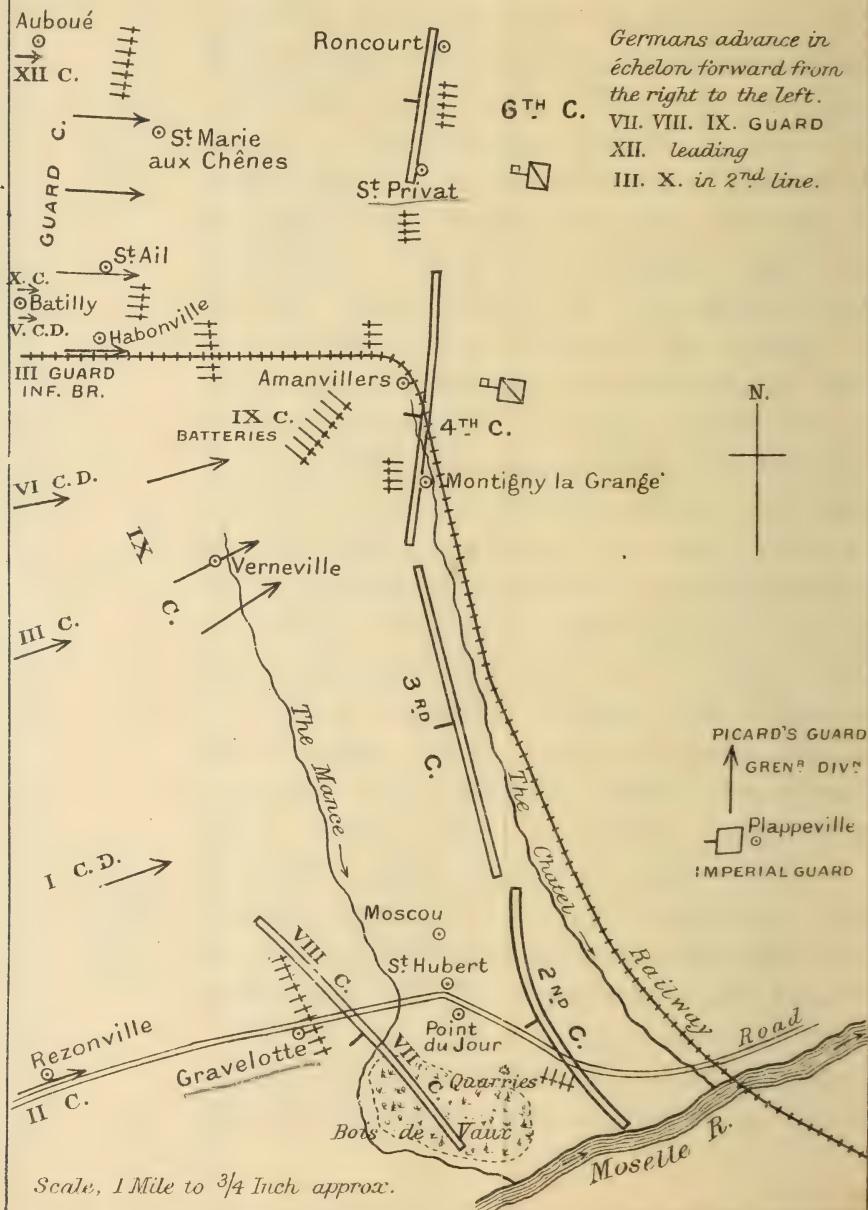
As to the French, Marshal Bazaine, learning of the stroke against his right, had at 3 p.m. directed the Guard Grenadier Division from Plappeville on Roncourt. This division lost its way, and Canrobert, not reinforced, retired from Roncourt on St. Privat. Thus the Saxons easily entered Roncourt. Then came the second attack of the German Guard, helped by the Saxons. After an awful artillery fire on both sides the infantry rushed and took the stronghold about 8 p.m.

The 6th C. retired south, meeting east of Amanvillers their Guard Grenadier Division and Reserve Artillery, which entered on a duel with

Gravelotte - St Privat, Aug. 18, 5 P.M.

Germans....230,000.

French.....130,000.



Germans advance in
échelon forward from
the right to the left.
VII. VIII. IX. GUARD
XII. leading
III. X. in 2nd line.

the German guns. The 4th C. also began to evacuate Amanvillers, though it held that place all night; and not till 3 a.m. on August 19 did the 3rd C. evacuate its position, and the 2nd C. stood its ground till 5 a.m.

The numbers were 232,000 Germans, loss 20,000; 133,000 French, loss 13,000—note the assailants generally lose more.

Tactical Comments.—(1) Hamley suggests that the Germans need not have fought this battle. But could Metz have been invested otherwise? He also suggests that Bazaine, instead of fighting, would have done better by escaping south-eastwards on the east of the Moselle on the 17th. But the move would probably have failed.

(2) On the German side the great errors were the ill-timed first attack of the Prussian Guard, and all three attacks by the right. On this latter wing Steinmetz was to use guns only, but he sent infantry, which carried St. Hubert at 3 p.m. Then at 4 p.m. came his great error—guns and cavalry—and the advanced infantry retired except at St. Hubert. The third attack was equally wrong, and Moltke should not have allowed the II. Corps to participate—it could do no good at so late an hour. Steinmetz should have moved through the Vaux wood and not *viâ* Gravelotte, and the battle was really won by Prince Frederick Charles. The fact is that Moltke did not know on the morning of the 18th the position of the

French right and that headquarters kept up little touch with the troops in front and issued orders for the 18th so early as 2 p.m. on the 17th, the reason being that the aged King had to seek rest at Pont-à-Mousson.

(3) On the German side, note the massing of guns, little use made of cavalry, uselessness of attacking in masses, the dangerous position of the IX. Corps batteries.

(4) On the French side, the Guard was on the wrong flank, Bazaine by a counter-attack might have broken the German centre, and, like his enemy, he fought with reversed front. At Gravelotte, as at Vionville, the French commander thought too much of Metz and too little of his field army.

The Germans then reorganised their troops, and a new phase of the great struggle opened.

CHAPTER VII

THE SIEGE OF METZ, AUGUST 19 TO SEPTEMBER 1, AND THE SIEGE OF STRASBURG

THE siege of Metz, which has no modern precedent, had not been expected, but had become necessary. It was entrusted to Prince Frederick Charles with the following Army Corps—I., VII., VIII., II., III., IX., X., and I. and III. Cavalry Divisions, *i.e.* 150,000 infantry, 14,000 cavalry and 642 guns. As Bazaine had more men (200,000) and as he might try to join MacMahon, the Prince kept his main strength left of the Moselle, thus: X. Corps held the Moselle towards St. Privat, II. Corps south of the X. Corps, then came the VIII. and the VII., the latter bridging the river south of the fortress; on the right bank stood the I. Corps protecting the magazines at Remilly and Pont-à-Mousson (by September 23 the Germans had a railway between these two places), and the III. Reserve Division N.E. of Metz. As reserve the III. and IX. Corps stood at Verneville. Earthworks and bridges—five over the Seille and nine over the Moselle—were at once constructed. The German line, 28 miles long,

lay two miles outside the forts, the roads were barricaded, the woods lined with abattis and lateral roads prepared : telegraphs connected the various headquarters. The French on their side arranged their villages for defence and linked their forts by entrenchments.

Bazaine's first idea of bursting out was *viâ* Thionville, and so he arranged a sortie for August 26—which like all sorties had to be frontal—on the right bank, choosing this bank so as to draw the Germans away from MacMahon; but just as the operation opened the commandant of Metz declared there was not enough artillery ammunition and that the fortress could not hold out if the army departed; it was also urged that with the army intact peace was more probable. Bazaine therefore stopped the sortie, and indeed it has been suggested he was a traitor—in any case he was unequal to so large a command.

On August 29 the IX. Corps took the place of the II. Corps, which latter joined the III. Corps as reserve, and the XIII. Corps from Germany was arriving. Bazaine now tried to break out in earnest; he chose the east bank because the Germans were mostly on the west and because the east bank presented fewer difficulties; his best route would have been south-east, being the weakest part of the German lines. He decided on a northward march, no doubt because it would lead him towards MacMahon. The result was

THE BATTLE OF NOISSEVILLE

AUGUST 31 TO SEPTEMBER 1

The French 6th, 4th, 3rd, 2nd Corps with the Imperial Guard in reserve captured Noisseville from the III. Reserve Division and part of the I. Corps, but later on German reinforcements retook the place. This was the first battle in which the French assumed the offensive, and the effect of the *chassepôt* was seen in the fact that their losses were fewer than the defenders'; on the other hand, the German artillery was far superior. Note Bazaine's indecision, and non-employment of the Guard, also the German counter-attack and artillery preparation before assaulting villages.

THE SIEGE OF STRASBURG

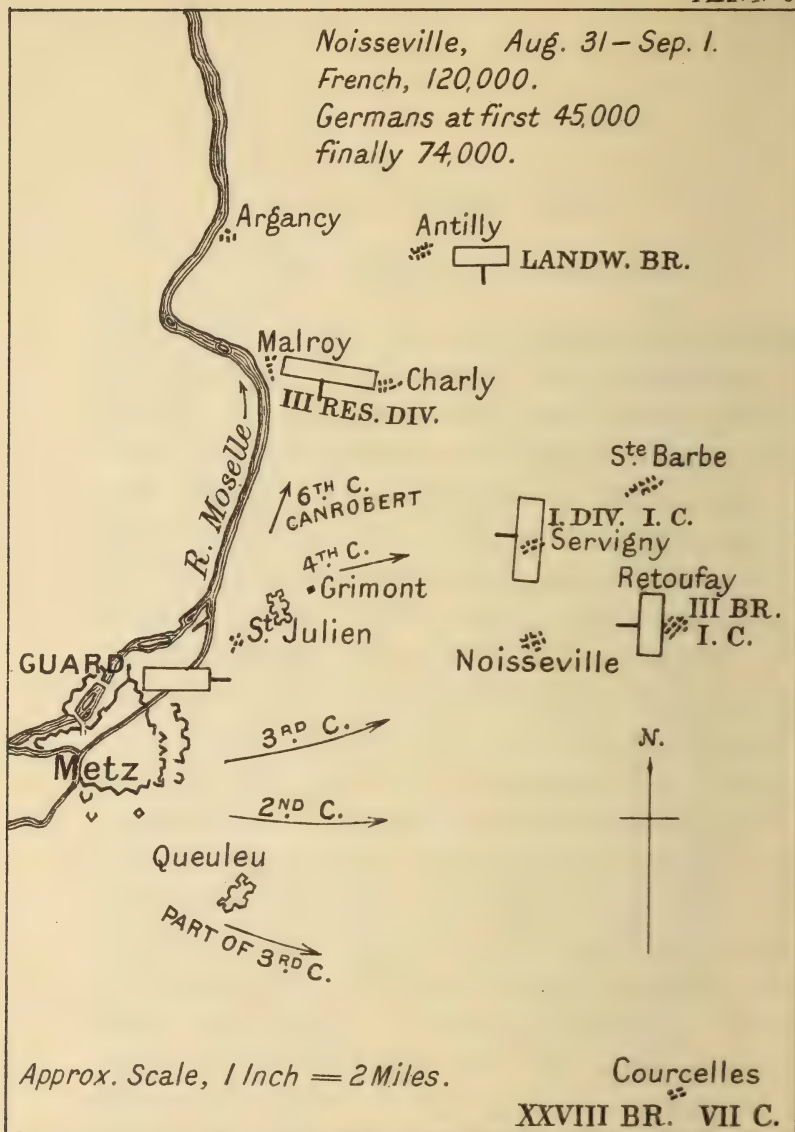
This strong fortress, commanding a passage over the Rhine, had a garrison of 23,000, composed of fugitives from Wörth and soldiers of the Garde Nationale, but without any Engineers; the armament, however, was ample. From August 11 Gen. von Werder invested it with 40,000 men, including the Baden Division of the III. Army. At first he bombarded it, not allowing women and children to leave, but he soon afterwards resorted to a regular siege.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PURSUIT OF MACMAHON

THE III. Army pursued MacMahon *viâ* Saar-union, Dieuze, Nancy, Toul, Commercy, to the R. Meuse, its cavalry well ahead; and to assist this army, which was 137,000 strong, there was formed after Gravelotte a fresh army of 86,000 under the Crown Prince of Saxony, namely, the Meuse or IV. Army, *i.e.* Guard, IV. Corps, XII. or Saxon Corps, and V. and VI. Cavalry Divisions. At Châlons had been collected the 1st, 5th, 7th, and 12th Cs. (the last including the Marines) and two cavalry divisions, of which force the Emperor, on arriving, gave the command to Marshal MacMahon. That officer was divided in opinion between his duty of covering Paris and his duty of assisting Bazaine. On the 18th he had news of the battle of Vionville, and therefore marched on August 21 to Reims, whence he could move either on Paris or towards Bazaine. Later, having ascertained that the III. Army had not been near Metz and that Prussian cavalry had appeared before Vitry, the Marshal saw the danger of moving eastwards, and, in spite of the Empress'

Noisseville, Aug. 31 - Sep. 1.
 French, 120,000.
 Germans at first 45,000
 finally 74,000.



order, insisted on a wise retreat to Paris, but subsequent despatches stated that in any case Bazaine would retreat *viâ* Sedan. This decided the chivalrous MacMahon, who, on August 23, started for Stenay. He moved slowly *viâ* Rethel for the sake of supplies and the railway, and on August 25 his left stood at Rethel and his right at Vouziers. On August 26 his main body lay between Attigny and le Chêne with the 7th Corps near Vouziers to cover his right flank.

Meantime the III. and Meuse Armies supposing MacMahon to be at Châlons were moving westwards, the III. Army in advance on the left, *i.e.* to the south, and on August 24 the two armies held the front St. Dizier—Bar le Duc—Verdun which last did not surrender till November 8. This day the cavalry of the III. Army found Châlons deserted and letters showing that MacMahon was at Reims, and would try to relieve Metz. Paris newspapers showed the same.

On August 25 the Meuse Army stood from Sommeille to Dombasle, the III. Army on the Ste. Ménehould—Vitry road, but the Meuse Army's cavalry, though scouting within nine miles of the French, learnt nothing of their whereabouts. In this district scouting was difficult, partly owing to the Argonnes forest and partly owing to the franc-tireurs. This day a telegram from Paris *viâ* London reached the Crown Prince, "MacMahon is at Reims and aims at joining

Bazaine." Knowing how difficult it would be for MacMahon to change his line of operation, the Crown Prince at first merely directed that Reims and not Châlons should be the objective, and that the cavalry of the Meuse Army should reconnoitre Vouziers. Moltke, though expecting MacMahon to act wisely, *i.e.* retire on Paris, was prepared for a flank march by the enemy, and on fresh information appearing in the newspapers there was ordered this night, August 25,

THE GRAND RIGHT WHEEL OF THE III. AND MEUSE ARMIES

August 26. The Meuse Army made for the front Varennes—Verdun, and the cavalry found the French 7th Corps at Vouziers; the horsemen creating a panic which delayed MacMahon's eastward march. This surprise was due to the foolish disposition of the French cavalry—the 4th Cavalry Division (Margueritte) being on the left and the 2nd (Bonnemain) in rear of the army; the 1st and 3rd Cavalry Divisions were with Bazaine. The French should now have repulsed the Germans, but they could not penetrate the German cavalry screen.

August 27. On the French side the 7th Corps at Vouziers and the 5th Corps at Buzancy covered the right, the 12th Corps made for le Chêne and the 4th Cavalry Division for Beaumont, in rear on the R. Aisne were the 1st Corps and the 2nd

Cavalry Division. On the German side the Meuse Army made for the front Grand Pré-Dun, whilst the III. Army was hurrying up on the left *via* Ste. Ménehould. This night MacMahon, learning that Bazaine was still in Metz, for communication between the two Marshals was kept up, resolved on retreat, but urgent orders from Paris drove him on.

August 28. The retreat had indeed begun when the Marshal again ordered advance—hence considerable confusion. This day the 12th Corps reached La Besace, the 1st Corps le Chêne, the 7th Corps Boulton aux Bois owing to a false report of the Prussians being at Buzancy, and the 5th Corps Bois des Dames. The German Meuse Army was waiting for the III. Army.

August 29. MacMahon hearing that the Germans so held the Meuse that he, having no pontoons, would have to cross at Mouzon, crossed at that place with his left, *i.e.* the 12th Corps and 4th Cavalry Division, whilst in his centre the 1st Corps and 2nd Cavalry Division moved to Raucourt, south of Sedan, and the 7th Corps rested at Oches (W. of Beaumont, N.W. of Sommauthe, S. of Stonne), and on his right the 5th Corps should have made for Beaumont, but the order was captured and the 5th Corps went towards Stenay.

As yet only cavalry and the XII., the leading corps of the Meuse Army, had come into touch with the French, but now the Guard came into line at Buzancy and the XII. Corps encountered

part of the 5th Corps, which at once retired north. The III. Army was closing up, and of the Meuse Army the V. Cavalry Division at Attigny was on the French communications and the VI. Cavalry Division close on the French troops. Moltke now decided to attack MacMahon before he could cross the Meuse; therefore on the German right the Meuse Army made for Beaumont and the III. Army for the space between Beaumont and le Chêne. The result was the

BATTLE OF BEAUMONT

AUGUST 30

On the German left the XI. Corps and the Württemberg Division headed for le Chêne and the VI. Corps for Vouziers; in the German centre the two Bavarian Corps for Sommauthe and the V. Corps for Oches; on the German right the IV. and XII. Corps moved along the west bank of the Meuse. In reserve was the Guard.

MacMahon had meant to cross the river this day and the 1st Corps and 2nd Cavalry Division did cross at Rémilly, midway between Mouzon and Bazeilles, but the 7th Corps toiling along from Oches was struck by the Prussian horse, and Gen. Felix Douay, hearing guns at Beaumont, moved off towards Rémilly. As to the 5th Corps, the covering force, it had struggled worn out to Beaumont, and there Gen. de Failly at 1.30 p.m., whilst feeding his men, was fallen upon by the Germans, *i.e.* the IV. Corps with the XII. Corps

on its right and the I. Bavarian Corps on its left. De Failly retired towards Mouzon, where the 12th Corps batteries on the right bank helped him. He was, however, broken, and crossed the Meuse in sorry plight. As usual the attackers lost more men, and though the French were surprised they retired with their usual skill. The river forbade pursuit, but the strategic result was that MacMahon was forced into an unfavourable position. Note de Failly's defective service of security and the 7th Corps' failure to assist.

During the battle the Saxon cavalry on the right of the Meuse Army had reconnoitred towards Carignan, the Guards had reached Beaumont, the I. Bavarian Corps, Raucourt, south of Sedan, followed by the II. Bavarian Corps, the V. Corps, and the XI. Corps. It seemed likely that MacMahon would have to pass into Belgium, and that government was requested in that event to disarm his troops. The French Marshal having got all his men across, ordered concentration on Sedan, whence he would move to Mézières, where was Gen. Vinoy with the new 13th Corps. MacMahon's army was a rabble ruined by rain, want of food, defeats, and aimless marches. This day, the 30th, the 7th Corps with the Emperor Napoléon arrived in Sedan.

August 31. The 12th Corps, the 5th Corps, and the 1st Corps reached Bazeilles, on which place the German guns opened that evening.

TABLE OF MACMAHON'S MARCH

August . . .	20	22	25	26	27	28	29	30
1st C.. . .	Camp of Châlons	Rheims	Attigny	Attigny	Attigny	le Chêne	Raucourt	1 and 3 Divisions cross at Ré- milly. 2 and 4 Divisions cross at Carig- nan.
5th C. . . .	"	"	Rethel	le Chêne	Brieuilles	B. des dames	Beaumont	Cross at Mouzon.
7th C. . . .	"	"	Vouziers	Vouziers	Vouziers	Boult aux bois	Oches	1 and 3 Divisions Rémilly. 2. Sedan.
12th C. . . .	"	"	Rethel	Rethel	le Chêne	Stonne	Mouzon	Mouzon.
2nd R. C. D. . .	"	"	"	"	"	"	Raucourt	Cross at Rémilly.
4th R. C. D. . .	"	"	le Chêne	le Chêne	Stonne	Mouzon	Mouzon	Mouzon.

August 31.—All in Sedan.

Beaumont, Aug. 30.
Approx. Scale 1 Inch = 3 Miles.

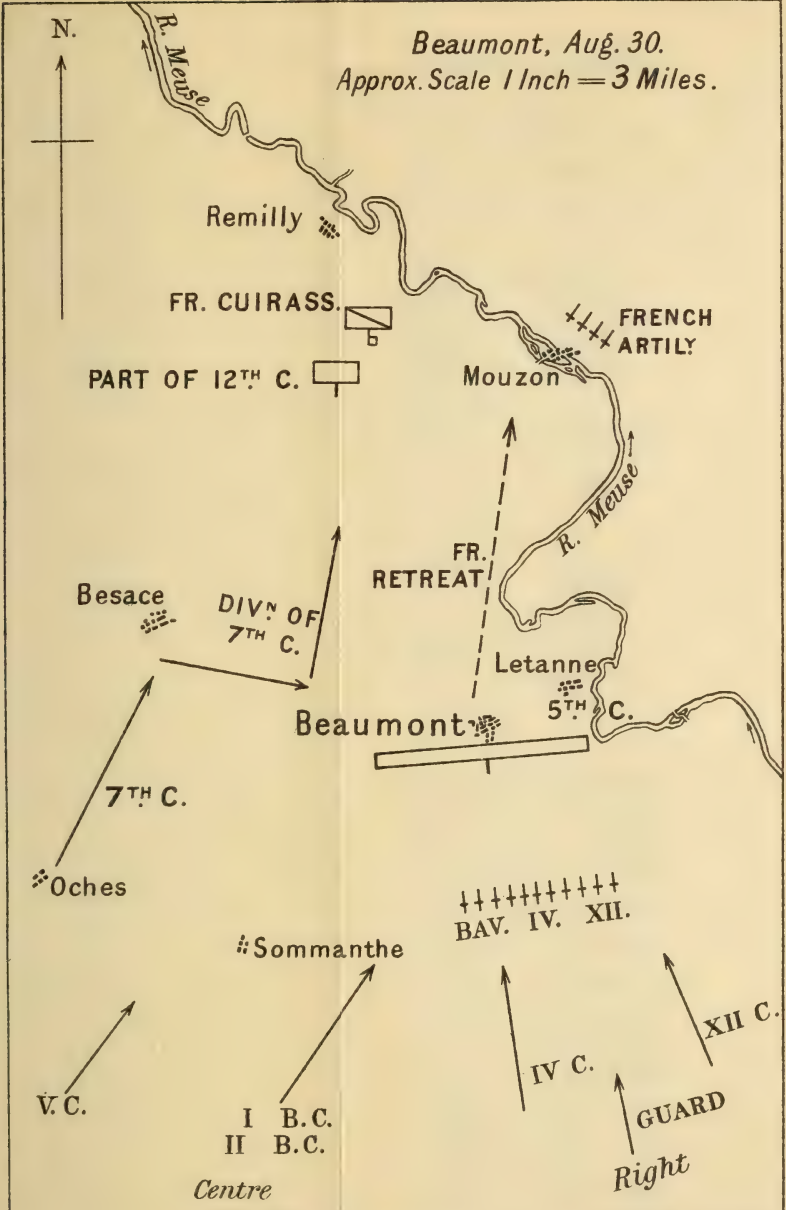


TABLE OF MARCH OF III. AND MEUSE ARMIES

August 25.—Both Armies on line Verdun-Vitry.

August	25	29	30	31
<i>III. A.:</i>				
V. . .	Bar le Duc	Grand Pré	Oches	On Donchery
VI. . .	On Vitry	Varennés	Vouziers	Vouziers
XI. . .	Blesme	Grand Pré	Stonne	On Donchery
I. B. .	Bar le Duc	"	Raucourt	Rémilly
II. B. .	N.E. of Vitry	"	S.W. of Beaumont	Raucourt
Würt. .	Blesme	"	Oches	On Donchery
II. C. D. .	S. of Vitry	"	"	"
IV. C. D.	Chalons	Vouziers	Raucourt	On Sedan
<i>Meuse A.:</i>				
IV. . .	N.E. of Vitry	On Beaumont	Beaumont	Mouzon
XII. . .	Dombasle	"	"	Douzy
Gd. . .	N.E. of Vitry	"	"	Carignan
V. C. D. .	Ménehould	Attigny	Attigny	Attigny
VI. C. C.	S. of Ménehould	"	"	On Mézières

Of the Meuse Army the Saxon and Guard Cavalry Divisions harassed the French, the Guard crossed the R. Chiers at Carignan and halted at Sachy with the XII. Corps a little to the west of that place, the IV. Corps stood at Mouzon and the VI. Cavalry Division reconnoitred far towards Mézières. Of the III. Army the IV. Cav. Division reconnoitred towards Sedan and the I. Bavarian Corps reached Rémilly, where firing broke out; the Bavarians seized the railway bridge and entered Bazeilles, but opposed by the 12th and 1st Corps recrossed the Meuse. Two pontoon

bridges were then laid at Allicourt, just north of Rémilly, and the two Bavarian Corps bivouacked south of the Meuse; the XI. and V. Corps moved on Donchery, laid two bridges and destroyed the railway bridge; on the extreme left lay the Württemberg Division. Thus, in spite of bad weather and of having to live on the country, the two German armies had forced MacMahon close up to the Belgian frontier and his only escape was by a risky flank march. They now prepared to close round him.

BATTLE OF SEDAN

SEPTEMBER 1

The French, 120,000, stood thus:—East of Sedan, from Bazeilles along the R. Givonne, 12th and 1st Corps; north-west of Sedan from Floing to Calvaire, 7th Corps with cavalry on the left wing; north of Sedan, the reserve, *i.e.* 5th Corps and more cavalry. The Germans, 180,000, moved to the attack in this order from the extreme right—Guard Cavalry between Belgium and the French 1st Corps, Guard against the left of the 1st Corps, XII. Corps against the 1st and 12th Corps; the IV. Corps from Rémilly acted as a link, and the I. Bavarian Corps from Allicourt on Bazeilles, II. Bavarian Corps stood south of the river opposite Sedan, V. and XI. Corps moved round west of the promontory of Iges against the 7th Corps; in reserve were the Württemberg

Division and four Cavalry Divisions, *i.e.* II., IV., V., XII., whilst VI. Corps and VI. Cavalry Division halted at Vouziers.

The I. Bavarian Corps opened the battle at Bazeilles, in which village desperate street fighting occurred, and MacMahon being wounded, named as his successor General Ducrot, who directed a retreat on Mézières; but General de Wimpfen had a secret commission from the Minister of War, and on the strength of it superseded Ducrot and decided to burst out *viâ* Carignan—neither course was possible. The French, however, resisted strongly, delivering two celebrated cavalry charges with Margueritte's Division; (1) near the Calvaire d'Illy, which was repulsed by troops of the XI. Corps; (2) near Floing under the Marquis de Gallifet, who also failed. By noon the ring was complete, the French were driven in on Sedan, and at 4.30 p.m. by the Emperor's order the white flag was run up.

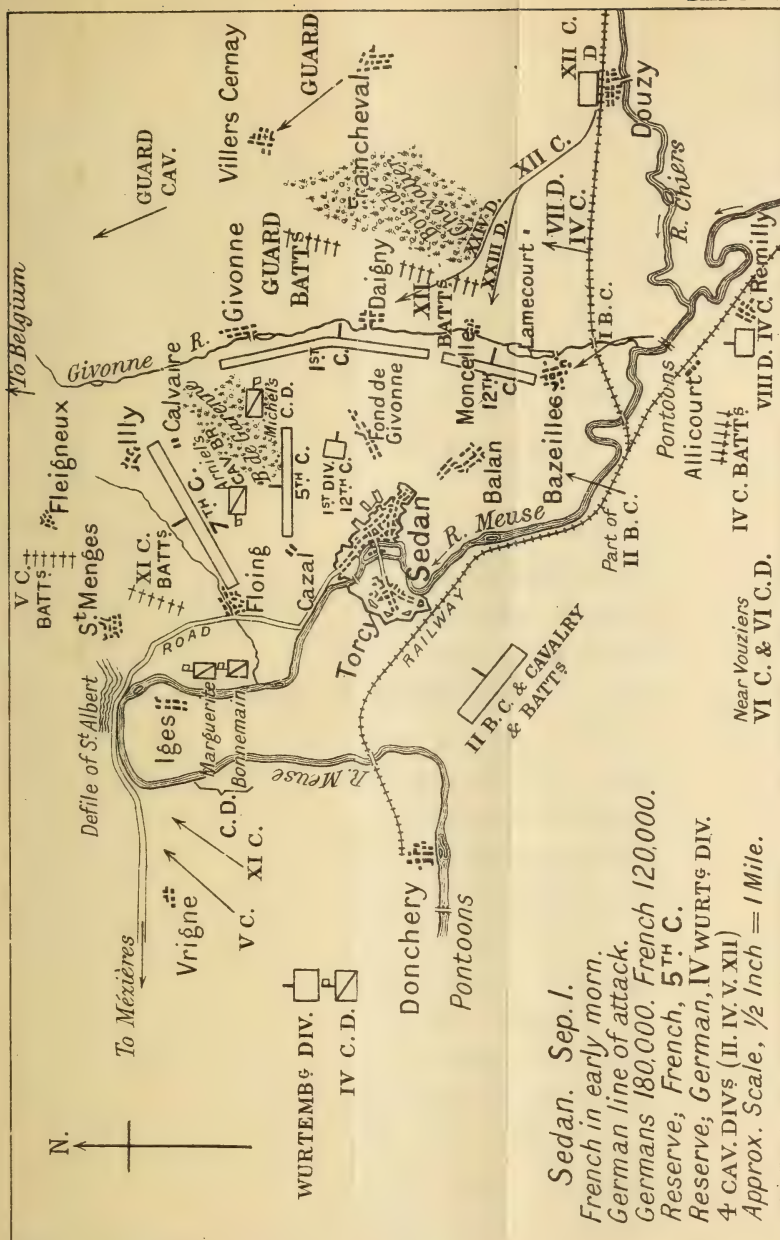
On September 2 the Emperor surrendered with the army. The German loss was 9,000, the French 17,000 and 104,000 prisoners, who entrained for Germany, also 3,000 disarmed in Belgium, 558 guns and one eagle. The great result of the battle was the fall of Napoléon's empire.

Tactical Comments.—(1) On the German side great effect of artillery posted on dominating heights, infantry in open order, guns pushed

ahead of infantry, artillery preparation, enveloping movement; (2) on the French side little effect of cavalry charges, passive defence, non-destruction of the Bazeilles bridge, non-occupation of the defile of St. Albert.

Strategic remarks on the pursuit of MacMahon.

—(1) At Châlons MacMahon had the following courses open to him—retire on Paris, fight at Châlons, move south and then return and threaten the German line near Nancy, move northwards or attempt the march he did. (2) MacMahon's flank march was not so dangerous as Jackson's round Pope in August 1862. He had five days' start, and on August 25 might have fallen upon the Meuse Army, but his errors were glaring, *e.g.* delay, cavalry in a false position, shifting of the 5th and 7th Corps, the 12th, the best corps, should have been on the right, absence of feints. (3) On reaching Sedan MacMahon had the following courses open to him—break out towards Metz, retreat into Belgium, fight at Sedan, retreat on Mézières.



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CHAPTER IX

THE TACTICS OF AUGUST 4 TO AUGUST 6, 1870

BATTLE OF SPICHEREN OR FORBACH

AUGUST 6

ON the night of August 5, there were within twenty-eight miles of Spicheren the following troops—French, five army corps and four cavalry divisions; German, four army corps and three cavalry divisions; namely, on the French side, 2nd Corps (Frossard) and a Cavalry Division (Valabrègue) near Spicheren, 5th Corps (de Failly) near Bitsch, of which Lapasset's Brigade was at Sarreguemines (Saargemünd)—the rest of this corps was attached to MacMahon, 3rd Corps (Bazaine) and two Cavalry Divisions near St. Avold, 4th Corps (Ladmirault) and a Cavalry Division near Bouzonville, Guard (Bourbaki) W. of St. Avold; on the German side, VII. Corps (von Zastrow), VIII. Corps (von Goeben), and III. Cavalry Division (all of von Steinmetz's I. Army), III. Corps (von Alvensleben I.) and IV. Corps (von Alvensleben II.)—both of Frederick Charles' II. Army—on a front through Neunkirchen from N.W. to

S.E., all screened by the II. Army's V. and VI. Cavalry Divisions under von Rheinbaben.

Early on August 6 the Germans advanced, Rheinbaben reporting that the French had evacuated the Saarbrücken heights. Frederick Charles directed the cavalry to keep close touch with the enemy, but directed no infantry attack because he thought it necessary to wait for the result of the Crown Prince's action with MacMahon. Von Steinmetz had already encroached upon ground set apart for the II. Army, and being as yet in ignorance that he was to cross the Saar below Saarbrücken directed his VII. Corps on that town, whither Frederick Charles also directed his right, *i.e.* the III. Corps; hence confusion.

The result was that the VII. Corps moved its XIII. Division on Völklingen and its XIV. Division on Saarbrücken, whilst the VIII. Corps marched a little to the left rear of the XIV. Division. The fact is that Steinmetz did not know that the I. and II. Armies were to wait for the Crown Prince's action, and this ignorance was to lead to a premature offensive. As to the II. Army the III. Corps sent its V. Division on Saarbrücken, whilst the III. Cavalry Division watched the Saar below Völklingen, then up the river came the V. and VI. Cavalry Divisions who scouted across the Saar and reported that Frossard was retiring by railway from the Spicheren heights—this was an erroneous assumption.

Kameke's XIV. Division therefore entered Saarbrücken relying on help from the XVI. and V. Divisions. At 11.30 a.m. Kameke occupied the Drill Ground Hill; in front of him was the 2nd A.C., *i.e.* 24,000 infantry, 3,000 cavalry, and 90 guns, but he judged them to be far inferior to these numbers. The guns on both sides opened, the French firing from the Rotheberg or Red Hill, and Kameke, convinced he had only a rearguard in front of him, decided at 12 noon to attack.

The French 2nd Corps stood thus: 1st Division under Vergé partly N.E. of Stiering Wendel, partly W. of Forbach; 2nd Division under Bataille at Oettingen; 3rd Division under Laveaucoupet at Spicheren. Frossard had thrown up some entrenchments, but had not prepared for retreat though he knew it might be necessary. But the chief blame must fall on Napoléon and Le Bœuf, his Chief of Staff, for not telling Frossard what to do if he were attacked. On the Germans' approach Frossard asked Bazaine, practically in chief command, for reinforcements from the 3rd Corps and parts of that corps were sent forward, Bazaine adding that if the affair became serious Frossard should retire on Calenbronn or Cadenbronn, a strong position near Saargemünd or Sarreguemines. Relying on the 3rd Corps and unwilling to abandon the stores at Forbach, Frossard decided to stand, and we cannot blame him.

His position, half on the height, half in the plain, was bad; but he had to cover the stores at Forbach and feared an attack from Saarelouis. The Spicheren plateau separated from Saarbrücken ridge by the St. Arnual valley is steep and wooded, the Rotheberg being particularly difficult of ascent; east of the Rotheberg lie the Gifert wood and the St. Arnual wood—sometimes called the Stifts wood; S.E. of Stiering Wendel is the Spicheren wood. Note also the railway through the Forbach valley, the Forbacher Berg and two good roads—from Spicheren westward through Stiering Wendel and from Spicheren northwards to Saarbrücken. Along the Metz high road note Baraque Mouton, a farmhouse, the Golden Bremm or Brewery, two houses, and the French Toll House; also the Folster Berg with the German Toll House, the Galgenberg, the Stiering Foundry, and the strong village of Stiering Wendel.

Henderson remarks on the following favourable points in the French position: Commanding position of Rotheberg, protection of flanks, lateral communications, good field of fire, a front not too extensive, *i.e.* five men per yard; also on the following unfavourable points: Position broken, being half in valley and half on heights, few artillery positions, the steepness of the heights, the woods hampering defender, counter-attack not easy.

At 11.30 a.m. Frossard chose for his main line

the crest of the plateau, the centre of the Stiering copse and the Stiering—Schöneck road ; this was not wise—it would have been better either to hold the lower border of the woods and the crest of the Rotheberg and the northern border of the Stiering copse, or to hold Forbacher Berg and the ridge north of Spicheren with the Rotheberg as an advanced post. Note that he constructed no breastworks and that the Rotheberg, the key of his position, was a salient not secured by flanking fire—the fact is he was surprised by Kameke's appearance.

On the Rotheberg and eastwards stood Laveaucoupet's 3rd Division, having 6 guns on the Rotheberg ; Vergé's 1st Division held the French Toll House, Golden Bremm and Baraque Mouton, the centre of the Stiering copse and Forbach ; Bataille's 2nd Division stood at Oettingen, the reserve artillery was at Forbach. A few field works had been thrown up, but Frossard's great error was not reconnoitring enough, and thus he feared an attack from Völklingen.

At 12 noon von François, commanding the XXVII. Brigade of XIV. Division, was ordered to capture the Rotheberg ; underestimating the enemy he rashly decided to assail both flanks at once. The German guns on the Reppertsberg opened and François moved forward.

Attack from the west, 12 noon to 2.30 p.m.—The Germans pressed on the Stiering copse under fire

from chassepôts at the Golden Bremm and from guns in the Forbach valley, vainly trying to turn the left of Vergé's position by sending a force through the Saarbrücken forest.

Attack from the east, 12 noon to 2.30 p.m.—François' left passed by the Winterberg and made for the space between the Gifert and Pfaffen woods under fire from the Rotheberg, but once in those woods it could make no impression on Laveaucoupet's men.

Central attack, 1.10 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.—Kameke supported this by moving his guns from the Reppertsberg on to the Galgenberg; a Fusilier battalion under François in person rushed under heavy fire, and gained the foot of the Rotheberg.

At 3.30 p.m. XXVII. Brigade was in a critical position, for the XXVIII. Brigade was toiling through the Saarbrücken wood, where it got much out of Gen. von Woyna's control, and the XVI. and V. Divisions were not yet over the R. Saar. Then was the moment for a French counter-stroke, but Frossard remained at Forbach and did not grasp the situation—he lost his chance and simply waited for reinforcements from the 3rd Army Corps, which never came, whereas on the German side the XVI. Division was hurrying up on Saarbrücken and the XIII. Division was arriving across the Völklingen bridge and the V. Division was also fast approaching Saarbrücken.

Battle on the Plateau, 2.30 to 3.30 p.m.—

Laveaucoupet, knowing that most of Bataille was coming up, delivered a fierce counter-attack on Kameke's left in the Gifert wood, which would have been successful but for the fact that his attention was distracted to François and his Fusiliers, who, climbing up the front of the Rotheberg, rushed the height, François falling.

Battle in the Forbach Valley, 2.30 to 3.30 p.m.
—The right of the XXVII. Brigade in the Stiering copse pushed forward, helped on its right by the XXVIII. Brigade coming through the Saarbrücken forest and by some German guns, which took post on the Folster Berg.

Battle on the Plateau, 3.30 to 5 p.m.—About 3 p.m. Gen. von Goeben, commanding VIII. Army Corps, superseded Kameke and sent some guns of the XVI. Division to the Galgenberg; and when part of the V. Division arrived it moved under heavy fire to strengthen the weak German left between Gifert and Pfaffen woods. Then the leading infantry of the XVI. Division was despatched partly to the Rotheberg, partly to the Gifert wood. Gen. von Alvensleben, commanding III. Army Corps, then assumed command and sent forward the troops of the V. and XVI. Divisions as they arrived against Laveaucoupet and Bataille. All this time the small Prussian force on the Rotheberg sheltered in the trenches, originally made by the French, and aided by the guns on the Folster Berg and the Galgenberg held

its own against fierce French assaults. At 4.30 p.m. the chief command on the German side changed for the fourth time, von Zastrow of the VII. Army Corps assuming command. The Germans fell with vigour on Laveaucoupet in the Gifert wood, and succeeded in reinforcing their exhausted comrades on the Rotheberg.

Battle in the Valley, 3.30 to 5 p.m.—Aided by two of the German batteries on the Galgenberg and by part of the XXVIII. Brigade from the Saarbrücken wood the right wing of the XXVII. Brigade cleared the Stiering copse and carried the French Toll House, the Golden Bremm, and Baraque Mouton; it also carried on a severe contest in Stiering Wendel with Vergé and part of Bataille, whose superior numbers could have crushed the Prussians, but for the turning movement carried out by von Woyna and the rest of his XXVIII. Brigade. This force assailed Stiering Wendel and the Foundry from the west and thus alarmed Vergé for his retreat to Forbach. Still Frossard, far stronger in the valley and not beaten on the plateau, had a good chance, but unfortunately for him the XIII. Division was coming.

Battle on the Plateau, 5 to 6 p.m.—The German left wing, reinforced by fresh troops of the V. Division, with units all mixed up, maintained a stiff struggle in the Pfaffen and Gifert woods and on the Rotheberg against Laveaucoupet, who ultimately retired on Spicheren. It was a fine

piece of wood fighting. Laveaucoupet also retired his guns on to the Forbacher Berg, and his new position was very strong, especially on his right.

Battle in the Valley, 5 to 7.30 p.m.—On the German right in front of Stiering Wendel the units were all mixed and the Prussians seeing fresh French troops arriving retired on Drahtzug before Vergé's and Bataille's vigorous counter-attack. The Germans, however, checked the French generals' advance by moving the guns on the Galgenberg to the Folster Berg; still if only Vergé had come on with his whole force he might have snatched a victory—instead, Frossard retired him on Oettingen in rear of Laveaucoupet. The reason was the appearance of the XIII. Division in the west.

Battle on the Plateau after 6 p.m.—The Germans in the woods made several unsuccessful attempts to advance against Laveaucoupet at Spicheren, and also brought upon the Rotheberg eight H.A. guns which did good work, but in reality the Prussians here were in a perilous position, and to relieve them troops of the IXth Brigade, using the Golden Bremm as a support, delivered a fierce attack on Laveaucoupet's left on the Spicheren knoll and the Forbacher Berg, gaining the heights above the Golden Bremm. All this time Frossard got no help from Bazaine.

Then it was that Laveaucoupet and part of

Bataille delivered a savage counter-attack, which, however, was repulsed mainly by the threat against their left by the IXth Brigade troops coming through the Spicheren wood, and they retired under cover of the massed artillery on the Pfaffenberg and soon afterwards retreated.

On the German side a fifth change of command took place, General von Steinmetz having arrived.

Battle in the Valley after 7 p.m.—The German right moved against Stiering Wendel, with the result that Vergé's troops were with extraordinary skill—compare Beaumont—withdrawn on to the Spicheren wood.

The turning movement of the XIII. Division.—This division came *viâ* Völklingen and Great Rosseln, at 4 p.m., and about 7 p.m. took Frossard in flank at Forbach, the French ultimately retreating on Saargemünd.

The losses of the Germans were 4,800, of the French 6,000; the Germans engaged were partly of the I. Army—*i.e.* VII. Army Corps, part of XIII. Division and all XIV. Division; VIII. Army Corps, part of XVI. Division: partly of the II. Army, *i.e.* III. Army Corps, all V. Division; also the V. Cavalry Division and part of VI. Cavalry Division. Total 30,000 infantry, 4,500 cavalry and 108 guns.

Tactical Comments.—This battle was not a decisive victory; on the plateau it afforded some fine wood fighting and in the valley fighting about houses and streets. The French position was a

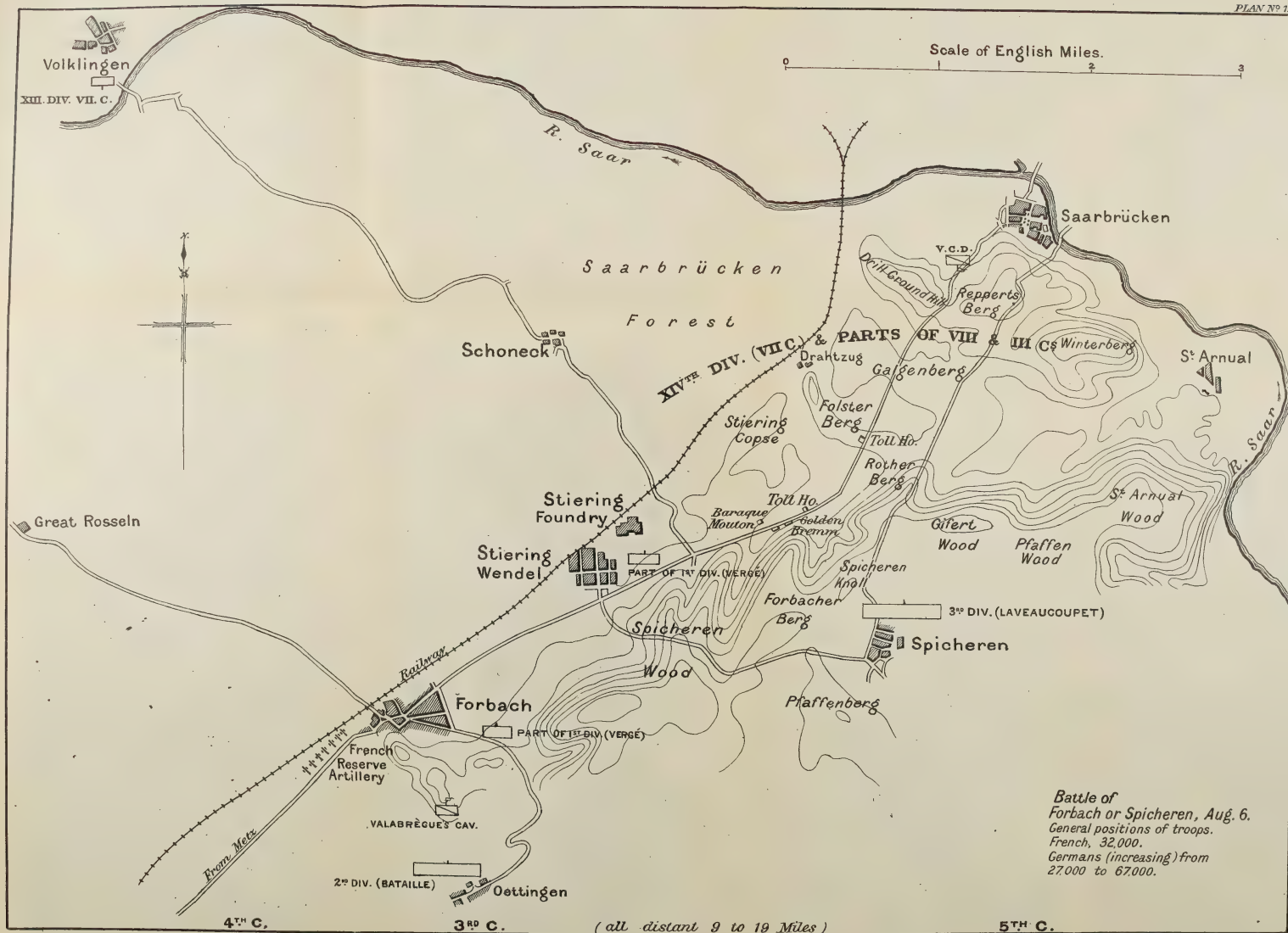
strong defensive one, but Frossard committed several errors—he was wrong in evacuating the Saarbrücken ridge and in not breaking the bridges; his cavalry did nothing; they should have been on his right, and swinging round along the west bank of the Saar could have fallen upon the German left flank; he did not properly control the action and did not deliver a vigorous counter-stroke with all his strength by the right flank—there were indeed several isolated counter-strokes but not in sufficient force. The reasons for this failure to counter-attack are said to have been (1) absence of reinforcements, (2) German guns commanded the whole field; he did not inform Bazaine of his retreat; the broken position, half on the hill, half in the valley, was a distinct disadvantage.

Defensive positions on hills have to be considered under two headings—(1) hills where the slopes can be swept by fire from the crest, (2) hills where the slopes cannot be so swept owing to steepness or to woods. In the first case put your main shooting line on the crest with a second line 800 yards in rear—this is what Frossard did; in the second case, which was the actual case at Spicheren, if woods stop your fire, occupy the lower edge of the woods with skirmishers, the crest with a second line, and place a third line 800 yards in rear; but if steepness stop your fire, then avoid the position altogether.

As to Bazaine it may be remarked that no doubt he expected the Germans to cross *viâ* Sarrelouis, and he did suggest to Frossard that if in danger he should retire on Calenbronn or Cadenbronn, a strong position just west of Saargemünd, and he did send forward three divisions, but Frossard would not retire on Calenbronn and did not call up the three divisions—the fact is, the French Commanders, unlike the German, did not act on their own initiative. As to the three divisions—(1) Montaudon of the 3rd Army Corps at Saargemünd heard the guns at Spicheren, but did nothing; at 3 p.m. he had Bazaine's order to go towards Saarbrücken; he marched forward but sent no one to Frossard, and at nightfall retired; (2) Castagny of the 3rd Army Corps also heard the guns and marched forward and backward without attempting to communicate with Frossard; (3) Metman of the 3rd Army Corps was sent forward by Bazaine at 12 noon but reached Forbach much too late to help Frossard. Bazaine is far less guilty than his divisional commanders, and if these three divisions had come up Frossard might have renewed the battle next day.

Note that the French mitrailleuse fire was not so deadly as expected, and note also the French counter-attacks, namely, at 2.30 Laveaucoupet, at 5 Vergé and Bataille, and after 6 Laveaucoupet and Bataille.

On the German side note the tactical use of the railway which brought up the III. Corps.



Kameke thought he had only a rearguard before him, and his attack was rash. He might easily have been routed; and indeed, if this action had not been fought, it is possible that the French would have concentrated east of the Moselle and given the Germans a chance of settling matters by an early and crushing victory. This grand idea of Moltke was frustrated, not only by this hasty battle, but also by the Crown Prince's objection to hasten his march, and by the unexpected resistance of MacMahon at Wörth. The German Official Account defends Kameke on the ground that the risk was justifiable, but we cannot accept this; it also quotes Frederick Charles' order to keep the foe at the sword's point, but this order was for the cavalry only. It also states that Kameke's sole idea was to clear the Rotheberg; but the fact remains that he underestimated the enemy. In any case, he should have waited, or at least reconnoitred. He was in a hurry.

The attack was made on too broad a front, and hence the units got hopelessly mixed; and, as the numbers were insufficient, the turning movement of the XXVIII. Brigade through the wood was injudicious. The cavalry who stood south of Saarbrücken were hardly employed, nor was there any pursuit, for which the excuse is made that Moltke was waiting for the III. Army to cross the Vosges; if so, then the battle should

not have been fought. Moreover, inferiority of numbers rendered the double flank attack very risky.

On the other hand we notice the better German discipline and the superior tactics of their officers, the great moral effect produced by the appearance of the XIII. Division, and the ardour with which the Germans hurried up to the sound of the guns. The battle without doubt damaged the 2nd Corps, gave Moltke important information, and led to the French retreat.

BATTLE OF WEISSENBURG

AUGUST 4

The troops concerned in this and the following battle of Wörth were, on the French side—1st Army Corps consisting of 1st Division under Ducrot, 2nd Division under Abel Douay, 3rd Division under Raoult, 4th Division under Larigue, Cavalry Division under Duhesme, with 108 guns; 2nd Reserve Cavalry Division under Bonnemain; 5th Army Corps under de Failly, consisting of 1st Division under Goze, 2nd Division under de l'Abadie, 3rd Division under Lespart, Cavalry Division under Brahaut, with 90 guns; also the 1st Division (under Conseil-Dumesnil) of the 7th Army Corps. All these forces under MacMahon totalled 55,000 infantry, 4,800 cavalry, and 27 batteries, of which five were mitrailleuse; but of these numbers only 43,000 took part in

the battle of Wörth. On the German side was the III. Army of the Crown Prince of Prussia.

POSITIONS OF THE HOSTILE FORCES ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 4

Of the Crown Prince's III. Army the II. Bavarian Corps (von Hartmann) was marching on Weissenburg on the Lauter, the V. Corps (von Kirchbach) slightly on the left of that corps, and on Lauterburg, farther down the river, the XI. Corps (von Bose) and the Baden and Württemberg Divisions (von Werder). In reserve the I. Bavarian Corps and the IV. Cavalry Division.

Opposite to these troops stood the French 1st Army Corps, which, without certain intelligence of the enemy, had its 1st Division on march from Wörth to Lembach, west of Weissenburg, its 3rd Division at Reichshoffen near Wörth, its 4th Division at Hagenau, its Cavalry Division divided thus—the brigade Nansouty at Seltz on the Rhine, the brigade Septeuil at Soultz, and the brigade Michel at Brumath—and lastly its 2nd Division under Abel Douay at Weissenburg, and on the heights south of that town, an excellent defensive position, where he was soon joined by Septeuil's cavalry brigade, raising his force to 8 battalions, 8 squadrons, and 18 guns. In addition the 1st Division (Conseil-Dumesnil) of the 7th Army Corps, worried by the German

detachment in the south of the Black Forest, stood at Colmar, the 3rd Division (Lespart) of the 5th Army Corps at Bitsch, and the cavalry division of the same corps half at Neiderbronn, half towards Saargemünd; finally the 2nd Reserve Cavalry Division (Bonnemain), which MacMahon did not use properly at Brumath.

General Douay did not suspect the near approach of the III. Army, for a strong reconnaissance despatched under Col. Dastugue to the left bank of the Lauter returned at 7.30 a.m., without having seen the enemy.

At 8 a.m., however, the guns of the advanced guard of the II. Bavarian Corps opened fire upon Weissenburg. Thereupon the Turcos or Algerian tirailleurs rushed from the Geisberg chateau, an elevated position, to the railway station, in order to support the battalion occupying the town itself. This frontal attack of the II. Bavarian Corps made no headway, but at 10 a.m. the V. and XI. Corps crossed the Lauter lower down, partly by fords, partly by the bridges which the French had not broken. These two corps then turned westwards up the river. The artillery of the V. Corps posted at Windhof (Vindhof) brought heavy fire to bear upon the railway station, on which also the infantry of the V. Corps advanced from the east; and at the same time the II. Bavarian Corps resumed its frontal assault. The French General fell near the three poplars,

Weissenburg,.....Aug. 4.

Germans, 40,000.

French, 5,000.

Approx. Scale, $1\frac{1}{4}$ Inches = 1 Mile.



Stanford's Geog^l Estab^t London.

London: Hugh Rees, Ltd.



mortally wounded, and at 12 noon the Germans had carried the town and station of Weissenburg, capturing many of the defenders.

A broken force of Turcos regained the Geisberg, upon which vain attempts were made by the V. Corps from the north, and by the XI. Corps from the east and the south. Then these two corps hauled guns on to the plateau and broke down the resistance of the defenders, who at once retired on to the farm of Schafsbusch, and by means of a vigorous counter-attack secured a disorderly retreat *viâ* Soultz to Wörth. The Germans did not pursue, and actually lost contact; those of them that had fought bivouacked south of the Lauter, the rest of the III. Army, including the IV. Cavalry Division, closing up. The numbers in the battle were 40,000 Germans, 5,000 French, and the losses 1,500 Germans, and 1,000 French killed and wounded, besides 1,000 prisoners.

Tactical Comments.—On the French side the scouting was bad, the bridges were not broken; on the other hand local defence was well managed, and the counter-attack was useful. Douay's force either was a containing force or it was not: if it was, it should have been retired; if it was not, it should have been stronger—in fact MacMahon disseminated his troops. On the German side cavalry was insufficiently used, and there was no pursuit, the IV. Cavalry Division being kept back (compare the Prussian cavalry in 1866).

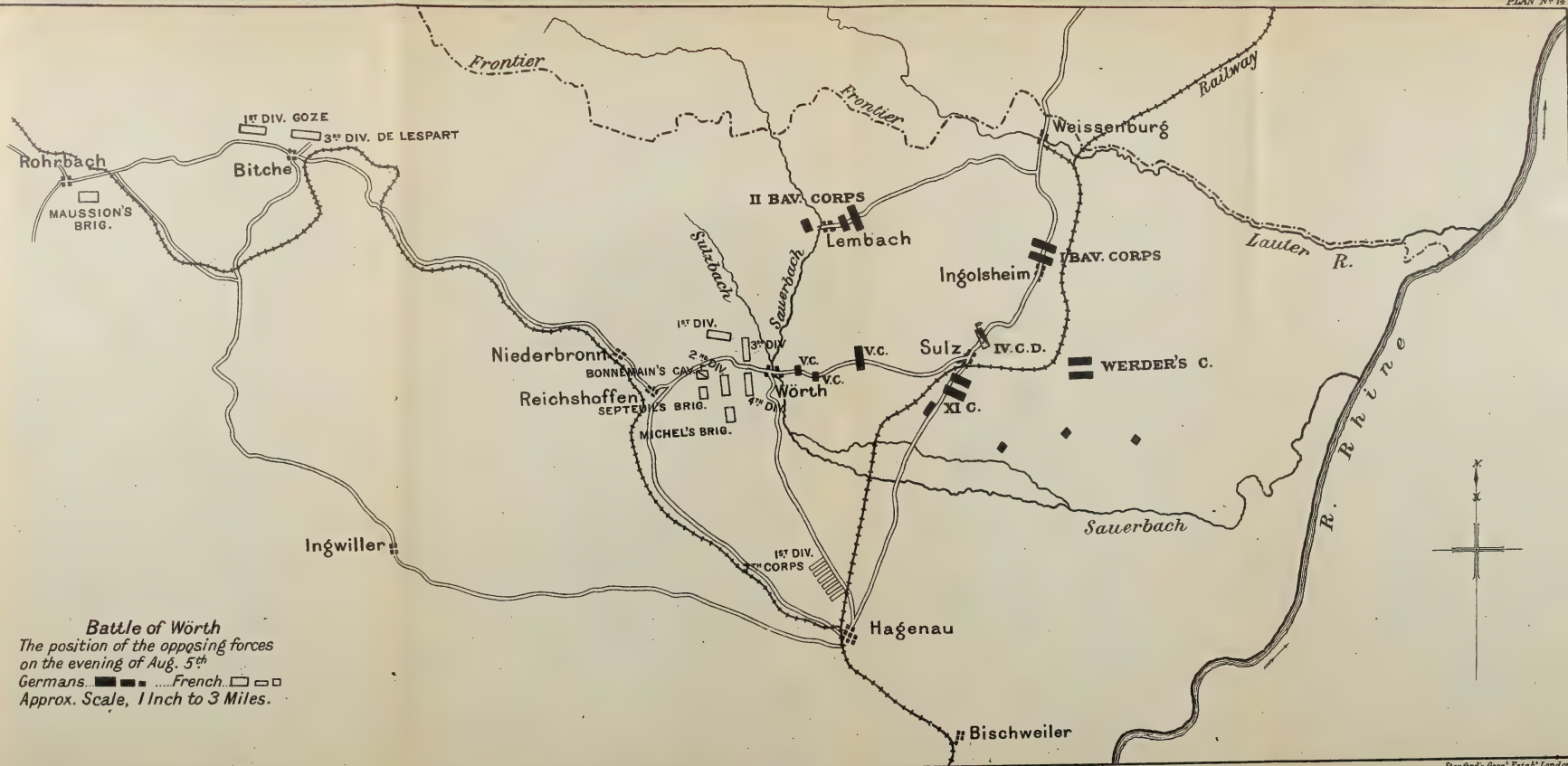
We note also insufficient artillery preparation, without which infantry cannot succeed, and the success of combined attacks.

BATTLE OF WÖRTH OR FRÖSCHWILLER

AUGUST 6

By the evening of August 5 the opposing forces were in the following positions—on the French side all the 1st Corps at Wörth, as well as 2nd Reserve Cavalry Division, *i.e.* the Cuirassiers of Bonnemain; Conseil-Dumesnil's Division of the 7th Corps, now under MacMahon, was, minus its guns, passing through Hagenau to take post on the morning of the 6th on the right of the 1st Corps. Lespart's Division of the 5th Corps, now under MacMahon, was at Bitsch, with orders to join the 1st Corps on the morning of the 6th. On the German side the III. Army stood thus—II. Bavarian Corps at Lembach, west of Weissenburg, V. Corps on Wörth, XI. Corps and IV. Cavalry Division at Soultz, Werder's Corps on the left rear; I. Bavarian Corps in reserve—all under orders to change front to the west. The Crown Prince did not clearly inform his generals of his intentions for the 6th, mainly because he, like MacMahon, did not expect a battle on that day. Out of the above forces the Germans engaged in the battle only 70,000 infantry, 4,280 cavalry, and 231 guns.

August 6. In the morning the French number-



Battle of Wörth
 The position of the opposing forces
 on the evening of Aug. 5th
 Germans. ■■■ French. □□□
 Approx. Scale, 1 Inch to 3 Miles.

ing 32,000 infantry, 4,850 cavalry, 107 field guns, and 24 mitrailleuses occupied a front Neehwiller—Fröschwiller—Elsasshausen—heights east of Eberbach (four miles long), in the order shown on the sketch. Note that Nansouty's Brigade of Duhesme's Cavalry Division was absent. In front was the Sauer brook, 20 feet wide and 6 feet deep, and difficult to cross except at the bridges. The elevated chaussée southwards from Wörth formed a good line of defence. The French had a good field of fire, and the steep and highly cultivated slopes were difficult of access. Wörth was a strong village, but Fröschwiller was the key of the French position. The right was secured by placing the reserve on that wing, and as to the left it was refused. The defects of the position were—(1) The Germans had open ground on which to mass their guns; (2) The very steepness of the eastern slopes favoured the assault; (3) The wood in the north and the Niederwald were weak points; (4) The Vosges passes in the rear formed defiles.

At 6 a.m. severe skirmishing took place between the French and the advanced troops of the V. Corps; a reconnaissance in force under General von Montbary rashly entered Wörth, but at 8.30 a.m. retired. At the same time the French made a demonstration opposite Gunstett, whilst in the north the II. Bavarian Corps, IV. Division leading, passed through Lagensulzbach and

the Neehwiller wood, but on reaching the southern edge of the wood was checked by heavy fire. At 9.30 a.m. the Bavarians, their left resting on the saw mill and their right in the wood, were struck by heavier fire, but at 10.30 a.m. General von Hartmann, commanding the II. Bavarian Corps, was instructed by the Crown Prince to suspend the combat, and consequently by 11.30 a.m. the II. Bavarian Corps stood behind Langensulzbach, also holding the wooded space between the Sulzbach and the Sauer. I should add that the order of the Crown Prince to stop the action was first delivered to V. Corps, and then forwarded to Hartmann. Meantime, however, the latter officer was informed that, in spite of the order, the V. Corps would attack Wörth and that it relied on Bavarian assistance. Hartmann therefore prepared to send his troops in again.

Soon after 8.30 a.m. the V. Corps resumed operations against Wörth, and at 9.30 a.m. its artillery—84 guns—opened against the French guns opposite, as also did 24 guns of the advanced guard of the XI. Corps, posted north-west of Gunstett. The effect was first to silence the French mitrailleuses and soon afterwards the field guns. The leading troops of the V. Corps then occupied Wörth, but could not issue in face of the French fire, nor did Kirchbach's (commanding V. Corps) left wing succeed in storming the Elsasshausen

heights. In fact, till 12.30 p.m. the V. Corps troops held with difficulty a front from Wörth to the Niedewald.

On the German left was arriving the XI. Corps, whose XXI. Division, hearing the guns at Wörth, placed its 24 guns as stated above. The men of the XI. Corps next tried to cross the Sauer at Spachbach, but were roughly driven back to the other bank, and men of the same corps suffered similar treatment in their effort to cross at Bruch Mill.

We may ask why von Kirchbach went on in defiance of the Crown Prince's wishes. The answer is that the action could not be broken off without great loss to the advanced guard, that the French guns were partly silenced, that he supposed the French were getting reinforcements and therefore delay would increase the difficulties.

At 1 p.m. the Crown Prince arrived and assumed command, whilst the Bavarian I. Corps was hurrying up so as to form a link between the II. Bavarian Corps and the V. Corps. As to Werder's Corps, the Württembergers came up through Dieffenbach to the north of Gunstett: the Badenens and the IV. Cavalry Division remained in reserve.

The Crown Prince, knowing that on the right the II. Bavarian Corps and at least the I. Division of the I. Bavarian Corps were ready to strike in, that in the centre the V. Corps was opposite

Wörth, with advanced troops across the Sauer, and that on the left the XI. Corps stood between Gunstett and Spachbach, with the Württembergers coming up on its right rear, planned a double flank attack. He therefore ordered II. Bavarian Corps to press the enemy's left, I. Bavarian Corps to act as a link between II. Bavarian and V. Corps, the XI. Corps to move *viâ* Elsasshausen, the Württembergers to follow that corps. As to the V. Corps, it was to delay a little to give time for the two flank attacks to develop.

At 1.30 p.m. the V. Corps advanced through Wörth, capturing Galgen Hill, where a H.A. battery of the XI. Corps opened fire on Elsasshausen. The I. Bavarian Division having come into line, Kirchbach, with the V. Corps in company columns, at 2 p.m. assailed the heights west of Wörth, which he carried after a hot struggle. The V. Corps artillery then crossed the Wörth bridge, and all the infantry of that corps was on the western bank ; no reserves were left.

Meantime on the left the XI. Corps troops from Spachbach and Gunstett, moving over the Sauer, managed to capture the Albrechtshäuserhof and also Morsbronn. The Germans at Morsbronn were just preparing to act against the Niederwald when they were charged by Michel's Cuirassier brigade from Eberbach—the charge was ordered by Gen. Lartigue commanding the 4th Division ; the horsemen, fired upon from the Albrechtshäuserhof

and by the troops near Morsbronn, rode gallantly at the infantry right into the streets of Morsbronn. With heavy losses they galloped on to Walburg, where they met some Prussian Hussars and but few of them got back to their friends. This charge enabled the extreme right of the French to re-form in the south of the Niederwald. Then came attacks and counter-attacks round the Albrechtshäuserhof, which resulted in the XI. Corps gaining the southern border of the Niederwald.

“The French right wing having thus been thrown back into the Niederwald, the attack upon Elsasshausen, in combination with the attack of the V. Corps upon Fröschwiller, had now to be considered” (Stone). For this purpose Gen. von Bose, commanding the XI. Corps, brought up all his men, leaving no reserve.

Gradually the Germans forced their way through the Niederwald and, in spite of a French counter-attack, succeeded in driving the French right on to Elsasshausen. This village the French held in strength with several batteries on the heights to the west. Gen. von Bose then brought up seven batteries and carried the village with a rush. Then came a vigorous counter-stroke by the French upon Elsasshausen which was with difficulty repulsed. This was followed by a charge of Bonnemain's Cuirassiers upon the pursuing Prussians between Elsasshausen and Fröschwiller.

The ground was unfavourable for cavalry and the horsemen after suffering severe losses at the hands of the skirmishers fled in all directions.

Part of the Württembergers now reached Elsasshausen and at 3 p.m. some of the II. Bavarian Corps, the I. Bavarian Division, and part of the V. Corps came on against Fröschwiller from the N.E. and the E. Thus from N.E., E., and S. the Germans, after some artillery preparation, rushed on the French stronghold and at the close of a desperate struggle the French, routed, fled along the Reichshoffen and Niederbronn roads, except the right wing, which made for Hagenau.

The IV. Cavalry Division being still in the rear only divisional cavalry was available for pursuit; this cavalry pursued as far as Reichshoffen, where MacMahon's retreat was covered by the lucky arrival from Bitsch of Lespart's Division of the 5th Corps. This division had been delayed by contradictory orders. The Marshal therefore rallied his left and centre at Niederbronn, but his right ultimately took refuge in Strasburg. It was such a rout that only one brigade of Lespart's Division went towards Bitsch to join the main French army; all the left and centre fled *via* Saverne, not blowing up the railway tunnel.

The losses on the German side were 10,000; on the French side 8,000, plus 9,000 prisoners and 33 guns.

Comments.—On the French side the battle was

a strategic error; it would have been better for MacMahon to retire on Frouard and hold the Moselle in conjunction with Bazaine at Metz. The bridges were not broken and the guns were not massed, the mitrailleuses especially being badly managed. Cavalry badly posted and employed in mass on unfavourable ground and proved to be useless against unbroken infantry. The Niederwald was not properly occupied and the retreat, though rapid, was tardy. But on the whole the French made a good defence, their entrenchments being serviceable and their counter-attacks excellent, except on the part of their cavalry; like their opponents they realised the value of points d'appui, *e.g.* Wörth and Albrechtshäuserhof.

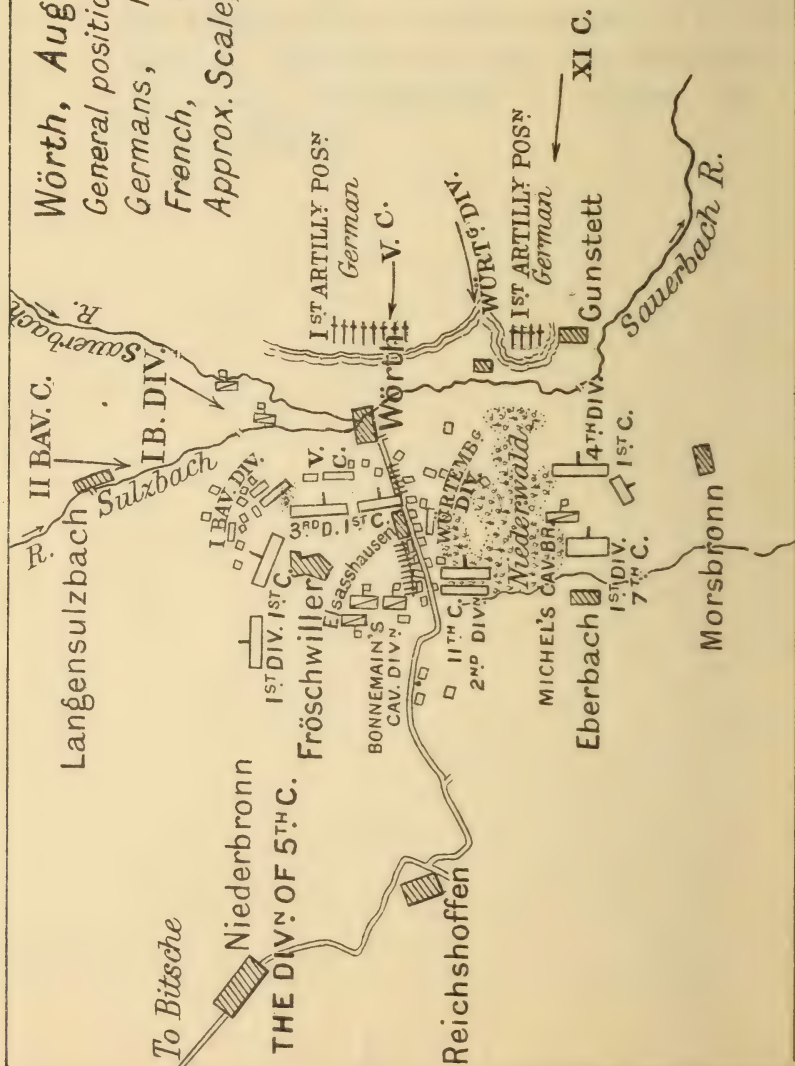
On the German side initiative and, in the later stages, unity of action. The double flank attack was well planned, and so was the simultaneous assault on Fröschwiller; but as, owing to Montbary's precipitancy, the battle took place a day earlier than the Crown Prince expected, the V. Corps suffered heavily, the II. Bavarian Corps was withdrawn, and pursuit failed. The victory would have been more complete on August 7. The artillery was excellent, massed batteries preparing the way for the infantry, firing on hostile counter-attacks, and ever ready to push ahead. The infantry attacked in company columns, those in front being completely dissolved into skirmishers;

even in open order it was too much for the French cavalry. Note, however, that whilst the flank attacks succeeded, the frontal attack on Wörth failed; also that there was no real cavalry pursuit.

The results of this battle were great—politically, the Emperor had to resign command of the army; morally, MacMahon's army was thoroughly demoralised; strategically, it severed the two French Marshals.

Wörth, Aug. 6th
 General position of troops.
 Germans, 130,000.
 French, 45,000.
 Approx. Scale, 1 Inch = 1½ Miles.

N.



CHAPTER X

GENERAL REMARKS

TACTICAL.—For the first time both sides had breechloaders; both infantries were equally expert in skirmishing and both fought in extended order. On the offensive, German tactics present the following features—flank attacks, artillery preparation, use of skirmishers, little cavalry action: on the defensive—skilful choice of ground, massing of guns, proper system of firing. On the offensive, French tactics present the following features—impetuous advance of skirmishers, excessive shooting; on the defensive—isolated counter-attacks, unwise employment of artillery, rash use of cavalry.

(1) *Infantry.*—The Germans believed in offensive tactics, the French in defensive, which do not suit that nation. In 1866 the Prussians had employed company-columns in attack, but in 1870 these company-columns, under the stress of modern fire, dissolved into skirmishers, supports, and reserves, and thus the battle fell into the hands of the lower officers, the control of generals being

weakened. The battalion-columns of the French likewise dissolved.

On the defence, shelter and extended order became the rule (at Vionville and Gravelotte, however, the French stood in deep formations); both attack and defence availed themselves of cover. Frontal attack being considered hopeless, flank attacks were resorted to—*e.g.* at Weissenburg, Spicheren, Wörth, and Gravelotte.

Tactical Defensive-Offensive.—In consequence of the great losses of the offensive pure and simple in 1870, Moltke after this war advocated the defensive-offensive—*i.e.* allow the enemy to attack, repulse him, and then assail him. The deadly effect of modern arms undoubtedly supports this view, which is accepted in Europe, but which is clearly contradicted by Japanese practice in 1904.

(2) *Artillery.*—The German guns pushed ahead and massed their fire, whereas the French reserved their batteries and made bad practice. This massing of guns, though correct for the attacker, is not necessarily correct for the defender. It should be noted that the effect of artillery is comparatively lessened, because nowadays (i) columns are not used and (ii) infantry fire is so deadly to the batteries—*e.g.* at Gravelotte the IX. Corps batteries suffered much from chassépôt fire, and at St. Privat, though an immense number of guns were massed against that point, yet the German Guard was repulsed until the French flank was

turned. The work of the German guns was conspicuous at Colombey, where they hurried along in front preparing the way for the infantry, as also at Vionville. The German guns did not fire at enormous ranges, their massed batteries prepared the way for their infantry, and they got rid of the idea that loss of guns must be avoided at any price. The French mitrailleuses can be described only as a failure.

(3) *Cavalry*.—It is clear that cavalry cannot charge with success unshaken infantry unless they take them by surprise. The German cavalry did little tactically except at Vionville, where Bredow's charge gained its end, though at great cost, and where occurred the celebrated cavalry combat. The French horse were repulsed at Wörth, near Morsbronn, by infantry in open order, nor did Bonnemain's later charge in the same battle effect much. A similar fate befell the French Guard Cuirassiers' effort to stop the III. Corps' approach to Rezonville.

STRATEGIC.—(1) *Cavalry*.—The duties of cavalry are—scouting, screening, raiding, pursuing, charging, the first four being strategic. Cavalry should act as the eyes and ears of an army; but the French cavalry, tied as they were to their infantry, simply did nothing of the kind, and thus eased the work of their opponents.

The German cavalry were at first too much kept back, as we see at Weissenburg and at

Wörth, nor did they discover in time the French right at St. Privat; but as the war went on they went ahead and screened the march of their infantry.

(2) *Does this War illustrate the Use of Interior and Exterior Lines?*—It is obvious that in 1870 Moltke did not move on such pronounced exterior lines as he did in 1866; but some maintain that though the three German armies had one base—the Rhine—and though their cavalry overlapped, the distance between the II. and the III. Armies was sufficient to create double or exterior lines, and it is undeniable that, if the heads of the I. and the II. Armies had merely contained Frossard at Spicheren, Moltke would probably have swung round the III. Army and crushed Bazaine between his converging masses, as he had crushed Benedek at Königgrätz in 1866. However that may be, the French made no attempt to act on the Napoleonic system of interior lines—contain one hostile force and crush the other.

(3) *Bazaine's suggested Escape on August 17.*—It has been suggested that he should have left a garrison in Metz and escaped south-eastwards towards Nancy, the Germans at that time having their II. and III. Armies west of the Moselle, and indeed, of the I. Army the Marshal would have had to meet only the I. Corps and the III. Cavalry Division; the Germans, in fact, were astride a river over which the enemy held an

easy passage on interior lines. By this manœuvre it is asserted that Strasburg would have been relieved and the German "line" cut. Probably, however, the Germans would have discovered the move; nor were the French mobile enough, nor was Bazaine able enough.

(4) *Absence of Pursuit.*—It is well known that a beaten army is out of hand; but it is also true that a victorious army is not, as a rule, capable of pursuing. The troops are exhausted and disorganised, the guns of the retreating enemy are formidable, and feelings of humanity act on the victors. For all these reasons pursuit is not very common, and in this respect the Franco-German War offers no exception, there being no real pursuit by the German troops; instead, we find a systematic strategic advance. The French, indeed, displayed considerable skill in retirement.

(5) *German Passage of the Moselle, August 15-18.*—On August 13 the Germans considered that Bazaine was retiring on Verdun; but there was always the chance of an offensive by him against the German lines of communication, therefore the I. Army was held east of Metz and the right wing of the II. Army was held ready to assist the I. Army.

As a fact, Bazaine meant retreat, and when on August 14 the Germans saw this, the I. Army forced on the battle of Colombey, which checked the retreat, as Bazaine foolishly allowed it to

develop into a big action. On August 15 it became clear that retreat was fixed upon, and therefore the passage of the Moselle was effected (see p. 45).

Prince Frederick Charles, convinced that Bazaine had moved farther west than he had, sent the mass of his troops towards the Meuse and directed only his III. and X. Corps northwards, expecting them to fall upon the French rear. This error might have had serious results, as is clear at Vionville August 16, where the French Marshal had a fine chance. Moltke remedied the position by ordering up towards Vionville the XII. and Guard Corps.

(6) *Detachments*.—Always regrettable because they weaken the main force, yet unavoidable. They should be as few as possible, should contain a more numerous force of the enemy, should in some way assist the main action, and should be under a good leader. There are three such cases in this period: the German force in the south of the Black Forest, the force besieging Strasburg, and the force investing Toul.

(7) *Fortresses*.—They were once regarded as a nation's salvation, and even yet strategists regard with favour entrenched camps and fortresses like Toul at peculiarly suitable points. The reasons which account for the decline in the importance attached to fortresses in general are—cost of construction, loss of troops in garrison, the works

become obsolete, the defensive is implied. A fortress always presents difficulties. Napoleon rightly realised that it must be subordinate to the army, but Bazaine failed to recognise this. He treated Metz as a base, whereas he should have used it as a pivot of offensive manœuvre. He should not have entered it as a refuge, but should have employed it as a support for his left whilst himself standing on the western bank of the Moselle.

Bazaine did, of course, contain numerous Germans, but he acted very unlike Barclay de Tolly, who in 1812 abandoned the entrenched camp of Drissa and retiring joined Bagration at Smolensk, and very unlike Gen. Lee, who knew how to employ Richmond. Inside Metz Bazaine's army, fascinated by the fortress and not really protected by it (rather protecting it), lost mobility—note Napoléon's warning to Soult in 1814 *re* Bayonne. Moreover it was invested by inferior numbers (a case up to that time unparalleled, except perhaps by the Roman siege of Alesia) because no longer is it true that an army in an entrenched camp must be invested by treble its own strength: the reason for this being that breech-loaders, entrenchments, telegraphs, and railways intensify the resisting power of the besieger, who, in case of a sortie, becomes the defender.

Fortresses, such as Strasburg and the Vosges fortresses, on the flank of an invader's march may

be regarded as a danger to his communications, but von der Goltz holds that in modern times this is not the case, because the garrison is too occupied, has too few cavalry, and if it should issue is nervous of capture; and indeed the Germans practically paid no attention to Langres.

(8) Students should also note the great use made of railways, the importance of the initiative, the excellence of the German mobilisation, and the striking fact of the little effect produced by French naval superiority. The Germans paid small heed to any French raid on their northern coasts, unless it should be reinforced by Danish troops.

The German navy was very inferior to the French—if assisted by a French descent on the coast the Hanoverians might have risen and the Danish people, if not their Government, were anxious for war with Prussia. But the Germans took all precautions, laying down mines and other obstacles and utilising what vessels they had. In fact, however, the French Admiral Bouet-Villaumez seemed paralysed, no doubt by want of proper arrangements at the Admiralty. Still it is an error to suppose that naval superiority did nothing for France—it damaged German commerce, it immobilised many German troops, it imported into France vast munitions of war from Great Britain and the United States, it supplied large numbers of men to the French army. Note that

Germany declared private property, not being contraband, at sea to be inviolable—not so France.

(9) ERRORS ON BOTH SIDES.

German Strategic Errors.—Though superior altogether they were inferior at Spicheren, Colombey, and Vionville; cavalry failed after Weissenburg and Wörth, and did not in time discover the French right at St. Privat; constant failure to pursue; Frederick Charles' error as to Bazaine's retreat on August 16.

German Tactical Errors.—Action of German right at Gravelotte; frontal attack at Wörth; battles caused by subordinates; general attack at Vionville 7 p.m.; dangerous position of IX. Corps batteries at Gravelotte; error of Guard commander at Gravelotte.

French Strategic Errors.—Fighting Wörth; want of co-operation at Spicheren and Colombey; Bazaine delayed retreat from Metz, and did not utilise the Briey road; he did not use Metz properly; cavalry useless outside the battle-field; mobilisation inferior, and supply system too centralised; their strategic concentration, partly near Metz and partly in Alsace, was wrong: such an error can be rectified only by a lucky victory or by a genius (as in 1809 Napoléon rectified Berthier's error). The original plan of an offensive into South Germany was seen to be impossible, and when defeat rendered junction of the two wings desirable, the erroneous strategic concentration made

it impracticable—compare the Austrian error in 1805.

French Tactical Errors.—Douay's action at Weissenburg: Guard in wrong position at Vionville and at Gravelotte; constant passive defence.

LIST OF QUESTIONS

1. The Germans harmonised in action without express orders; the French did not. Comment.

2. Bazaine did not regret that the battle of the 16th gave him an excuse for not retiring on Verdun. Comment.

3. The defensive is superior to the offensive. Comment.

4. State any German errors in this campaign.

5. Consider the employment in battles of the three arms.

6. Consider strategically Bazaine's movements from August 13 to 18.

7. With rough map, briefly describe the battle of Vionville.

8. Consider the German arrangements for the battle of Gravelotte, and especially their conduct on their right.

9. Describe the movements of the I. and II. Armies on August 15.

10. Describe the operations of the German left on August 18 (battle of Gravelotte).

11. Describe, with rough map, the German passage of the Moselle.

✓ 12. Briefly describe the theatre of operations.

✓ 13. Discuss the plan of campaign from the point of view of either combatant.

✓ 14. Write a note on Detachments and on Fortresses.

✓ 15. Describe the march of MacMahon from Châlons, August 21, to Sedan, August 31, stating his main errors.

16. Draw a rough sketch-map of Sedan, placing the troops.

- ✓ 17. Consider Bazaine's conduct during the siege of Metz.
- 18. Consider the courses open to MacMahon at Châlons.
- 19. At Spicheren how would you, as commander of the French, have occupied the position?
- 20. At Spicheren how would you have used the cavalry on either side?
- 21. With rough sketch describe the Battle of Weissenburg.
- 22. Write comments on the tactics of both sides at Weissenburg and at Wörth.
- 23. Consider the part played by the French fleet.

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